

Attorney General's Office Business Plan 2013-14

AGO Vision

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) supports the functions of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General (the Law Officers) to the highest professional standards in line with the AGO values:

- We strive for excellence in everything we do
- We act with integrity in our work and our relationships
- We work supportively, constructively and positively
- We treat everyone with respect
- We value each other and support personal development

The role of the Attorney General includes:

- acting as Chief Legal Adviser to Government, Parliament and the Crown; supervising and having general oversight of public prosecutors;
- Cabinet level membership of the Government;
- working with the Justice Secretary and Home Secretary to provide a more efficient, effective and accountable criminal justice system for victims and the public;
- carrying out independent public interest litigation functions;
- promoting the rule of law at home and overseas; and
- acting as leaders within the legal professional world.

The Attorney General also holds the separate office of Advocate General to Northern Ireland.

Our priorities

To support the Law Officers in the discharge of their functions in the following areas:

Chief legal adviser to Government, Parliament and the Crown, Cabinet-rank Minister and promoting the rule of law

Rule of law

- promoting the rule of law across Government

- promoting the international rule of law, by fostering respect for international law and by a programme of focussed international engagement in priority areas.

Legal Advice

- providing high quality and timely legal advice to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to help deliver the Government policy;
- providing high quality and timely advice to Parliament and to the Crown when requested;
- superintending the Treasury Solicitor's Department and overseeing Government litigation including by ensuring Government has available the best Counsel for the best value for money, and ensuring the Department has sufficient resources to deliver against its objectives through effective engagement with HM Treasury;
- providing input into the legislative process through the Attorney's membership of Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee;
- actively contributing to Government decision-making in Cabinet Committees such as the National Security Council and European Affairs Committee.

Devolution

- overseeing the effective operation of legal boundaries set out in the devolution settlements;
- performing the functions of the Advocate General for Northern Ireland.

Superintending the public prosecutors

- fulfilling the Law Officers' statutory obligations to superintend the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) & Serious Fraud Office (SFO) including by recruiting a new Director of Public Prosecutions during 2013;
- ensuring the Law Officers' are able to secure sufficient resources for the CPS and the SFO through effective engagement with HM Treasury and are assured of effective management of resources through engagement with the National Audit Office;
- fulfilling the Law Officers' duty to account to Parliament for the CPS and the SFO;

- facilitating the Law Officers' oversight of the criminal casework of public prosecutors, including the Services Prosecuting Authority;
- supporting the Law Officers' setting of priorities with Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) for scrutiny of the CPS.

Working with the Justice Secretary and Home Secretary to provide a more efficient, effective and accountable criminal justice system for victims and the public

- engaging with criminal justice system partners to shape and contribute to work on reforms and policy development from the perspective of the superintended prosecutors;
- engaging with criminal justice partners on the development and implementation of a criminal justice efficiency reform programme which supports the CPS and SFO's ability to deliver casework within their spending review provisions.

Public interest functions

Prosecutions

- referring potentially unduly lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal;
- considering requests for consent to prosecute where the Attorney General's consent is required;
- bringing proceedings for contempt of court;
- considering applications to stop a prosecution on indictment by entering a *nolle prosequi*;
- referring points of law to the Court of Appeal after an acquittal in criminal cases
- promoting international cooperation between prosecutorial authorities.

Administration of Justice

- taking action to restrain vexatious litigants;
- intervening in the public interest in certain charity and family law cases;

- considering requests for consent to make an application to the High Court for new coroner inquests;
- exercising the discretion to appoint “advocates to the court”, “special advocates” and “special counsel”.
- considering the exercise of the executive override under the Freedom Of Information Act in respect of papers of previous administrations [and dealing appropriately with requests for information held by the AGO].

Legal professional leadership

- maintaining relationships with the judiciary, Bar, Law Society and the Government Legal Service, including through an effective programme of meetings, briefings and visits to promote co-operation between them in the efficient and fair administration of justice, and understanding and support for Government initiatives.

Delivering the priorities

- providing excellent legal resources to the Law Officers;
- maintaining excellent working relationships in Whitehall, with the superintended departments and prosecutors;
- managing delivery of the Law Officers’ Parliamentary business;
- Effective and professional press and communications activity to explain, promote and defend the work of the Law Officers and the Department, foster transparency and accountability, and support staff engagement.
- Provide professional, timely and courteous responses to enquiries and other correspondence from the public; providing business support to the office including financial management, risk management, resources and systems;
- ensuring all resources are appropriately managed and that we provide value for money for the public.