



Oifig an Ard-Aighne
Office of the Attorney General

Statement of Strategy 2020–2023



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Foreword from the Attorney General

I welcome the publication of this Statement of Strategy 2020 - 2023 for the Office of the Attorney General. This Office has a mission to provide the highest standard of professional legal services to the Government, its Departments and Offices, as economically and efficiently as possible and to support adherence to the rule of law.

This Statement takes account of the Programme for Government and the significant developments in the internal and external environments within which the Office operates. These include but are not limited to the Government's response to both Covid-19 and Brexit. The strategic focus of this Statement is set out across four high level goals each accompanied by a series of detailed objectives and actions. These goals will serve to guide the work of Advisory Counsel, Parliamentary Counsel, the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the administration of the Office.

The staff and management of the Office are fully committed to this Statement of Strategy and I look forward to working with them to ensure the mission is achieved.




Paul Gallagher
Attorney General

Introduction from the Director General, Chief Parliamentary Counsel and Chief State Solicitor

We are pleased to introduce this Statement of Strategy for the period 2020–2023. This Statement of Strategy comes at a time of extreme challenge for the State and has been developed to allow the Office to meet these challenges and those that may arise over its lifetime.

This new Statement of Strategy allows us an opportunity to engage further with the needs and expectations of our client Departments and Offices and to recognise the need for ongoing cross-Departmental collaboration. In this context, it sets out the goals, objectives and actions against which our continued performance and progress will be measured.

While the core functions of the Office in relation to supporting the constitutional role of the Attorney General, drafting Government legislation and providing legal advice and assistance do not change, the environment within which we operate has changed and will continue to do so.

The challenges to the State arising from the Covid-19 pandemic along with the effects of Brexit and Government requirements demand that we are able to adapt and review our priorities to ensure they are responsive to evolving needs.

We look forward to further and more intensive collaboration with our client Departments over the course of this Statement of Strategy, supporting the Attorney in his constitutional role and facilitating the Government in pursuing the aims set out in the Programme for Government.



Damien Moloney

Damien Moloney
Director General



June Reardon

June Reardon
Chief Parliamentary Counsel



Maria Browne

Maria Browne
Chief State Solicitor

Our mission and our vision



Our mission is to provide the highest standard of professional legal services to the Government, its Departments and Offices, as economically and efficiently as possible and to support adherence to the rule of law.



Our vision is to inspire excellence in our people, be at the forefront of legal developments and deliver an unrivalled service to our clients.



Who we are

The Attorney General is the chief law officer of the State and is briefed on all matters of Government with a legal, human rights or constitutional dimension. The role is mandated by Article 30 of the Constitution.

The Office of the Attorney General is comprised of Advisory Counsel, Parliamentary Counsel to the Government and the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

The main functions of the Office of the Attorney General are -

- to provide legal advice to Government Departments,
- to draft legislation for Government Departments,
- to provide litigation services,
- to provide conveyancing and transactional services.

With over 300 legal staff (including seconded Advisory Counsel and State Solicitors) and a total complement of on average 450 staff, we provide client Departments and Offices with a full spectrum of specialist legal services spanning advisory, legislative drafting, litigation and transactional work.



We have deep institutional knowledge of the workings of the State and Government. This, combined with the professional legal skills of our experienced and dedicated staff and our whole of Government perspective, enables us to support the Attorney General to provide our clients with a high quality service.



What we do

Advisory Counsel

Advisory Counsel are primarily engaged in -

- providing legal advice to Government,
- directing litigation,
- advising in relation to the development of new legislation.

There are approximately 40 Advisory Counsel organised into 5 groups, covering an extensive range of legal specialisms. (See 'How we work' pg. 32)

Advisory Counsel have significant expertise across the spectrum of legal issues arising in public life, including the following -

- constitutional & administrative law,
- European law including competition, state aid and data protection law,
- criminal law,
- habeas corpus,
- policing,
- prisons law,
- health,
- planning & environment,
- child & family law,
- education,
- civil law reform,
- immigration & asylum,



- tax,
- public procurement,
- utilities,
- banking & finance,
- public expenditure,
- agriculture,
- marine,
- defence,
- property law,
- social welfare & pensions,
- labour law.

Parliamentary Counsel

The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government (“OPC”) provides a specialist legislative drafting service to Government.

The main work of the OPC is to draft -

- Government Bills, including Bills to amend the Constitution,
- Government amendments to Bills to be moved in the Houses of the Oireachtas,
- certain statutory instruments, including regulations transposing EU law and domestic regulations and orders.

The OPC comprises a team of approximately 35 Parliamentary Counsel trained to a high level in the specialist discipline of legislative drafting. The OPC is organised into 4 groups, each having responsibility for the provision of the above legislative drafting services to specific Government Departments and Offices. (See ‘How we work’ pg. 33)

The work of the OPC relates to a broad range of subject matter and areas of law, including -

- legislation dealing with substantial legal, constitutional or criminal matters,
- legislation of high political significance,
- regulatory and technical legislation,
- financial legislation,
- legislation giving effect to international law and EU obligations.



Office of the Chief State Solicitor

The Chief State Solicitor's Office ("CSSO") is the principal provider of solicitor services to the Attorney General and Government.

The CSSO has approximately 300 members of staff, including circa 160 solicitors and 30 legal executive officers. It is organised into 5 legal Divisions and subdivided into 16 legal sections and units. (See 'How we work' pg. 34)

The CSSO provides a full solicitor advisory, litigation and transactional legal service across a broad range of areas including the following -



- constitutional, civil and commercial litigation concerning Government Departments, Offices and An Garda Síochána,
- judicial review (both general and immigration and asylum related),
- environmental and procurement litigation,
- representing the State before the Court of Justice, General Court and European Free Trade Association Court,
- extradition, European arrest warrant and mutual assistance litigation,
- employment litigation,
- inquests and Ministerial prosecutions,
- recovery of fraudulent or criminally acquired monies,
- habeas corpus applications,
- tortious claims,

- representing clients in conciliations and arbitrations,
- representing clients before Tribunals of Inquiry and Commissions of Investigation,
- a transactional conveyancing service for Government Departments and the Office of Public Works (OPW),
- commercial leasing and licensing,
- landlord and tenant matters,
- security over property to protect State capital investments,
- devolution of real and personal property to the State under the State Property Act 1954 and the Succession Act 1965,
- full transactional public procurement and commercial law services to the Office of Government Procurement and Government Departments.

Legal Secondees

Approximately 30 Advisory Counsel are seconded as in-house legal advisors across most Government Departments and as legal attachés to the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU. There are currently a further 4 Advisory Counsel seconded to European and international institutions.

Seconded Advisory Counsel are involved in all major legal issues within Departments and provide legal advice directly to Departments. They act as a link between the Department and the Office of the Attorney General.

State Solicitors are also seconded to various public bodies to provide in-house legal advice and assistance, including to Government Departments, Tribunals of Inquiry, Commissions of Investigation and European institutions.

Library, Information & Knowledge Management

Legal knowledge and expertise is central to the provision of professional services by the Office. Legal staff are supported by staff with expertise in library services, information management, legal research and legal knowledge management.



Corporate Services

The Office has dedicated and expert administrative and support staff who play a key role in facilitating and assisting the delivery of services by the Office to its clients by providing the following services:

Legal Support Staff are responsible for providing clerical support and administrative assistance to legal staff, Heads of Office and the Attorney General.

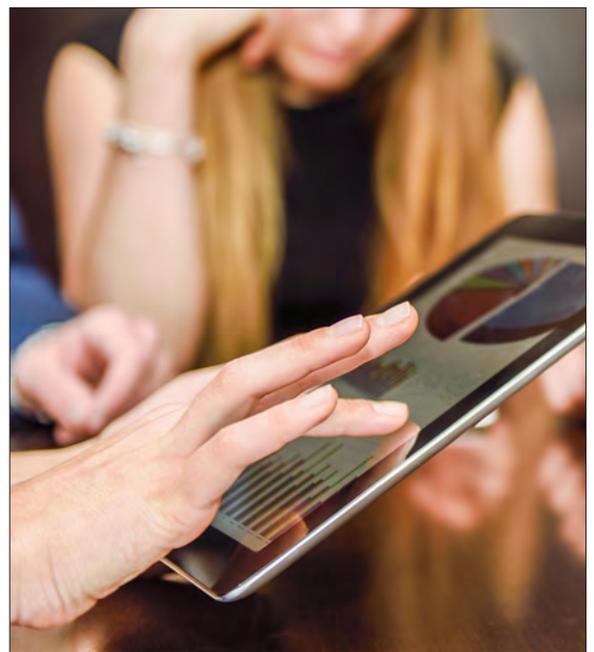
Human Resources are responsible for the development and implementation of progressive HR practice in the Office.

Training and Development support the continuing professional development of staff, through the provision of external education and training opportunities and in-house legal CPD events.

Finance and Accounts are responsible for managing the Office finances and ensuring that effective financial controls are in place.

Services and Facilities Management are responsible for the management of premises and facilities, aspects of health and safety, and also providing a range of support services to staff.

ICT are responsible for the management, development and maintenance of the Office hardware and software ICT systems, including its case management, office productivity, data network and communications systems.



Registry and Records The AGO Registry is responsible for file creation and storage, certain records management functions, the registration of post and compliance with National Archives obligations. The CSSO Registry and Records Unit is responsible for the management of paper and electronic files.

Secondment opportunities are available to, and are currently being availed of by, general service staff.

Key stakeholders



Our values



INTEGRITY

We strive towards the highest ethical standards, exercising the utmost integrity in both the provision of our services and our interactions with each other, our clients and our stakeholders.



QUALITY

The Office takes pride in providing legal services of the highest standard to our clients and is committed to supporting the continuing professional development of our people in order to maintain this standard.



IMPARTIALITY

The legal services we provide are objective, impartial, uphold adherence to the rule of law and ensure that the citizen is at the heart of the services we provide.



RESPECT

The Office is committed to fostering a culture of respect, dignity, equality and diversity that acknowledges the value and contribution of all our people, encourages collegiality and promotes a positive and healthy working environment for all.



PROFESSIONALISM

The Office provides highly professional and specialist legal services to Government and values the crucial role that support services fulfil in assisting the delivery of those services.

Our values are aligned with the standards as reflected in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.



Public sector equality and human rights duty

In its role as the primary provider of legal services to the State, as well as in its role as an employer, the Office is committed to complying with its responsibilities under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

As a service provider

The primary role of the Office is to assist its clients to implement their policy objectives through the provision of legal advisory, litigation, transactional and legislative drafting services. It is vital that those services fully respect the Constitution and European and international law in the areas of equality, diversity and human rights. As the primary provider of legal services to the State, the Office has developed, and maintains, a deep understanding of the legal obligations arising in this area. The Office is committed to continuing professional development to ensure that staff are fully aware of legal developments in these spheres. The Office is committed to continuing this ethos and practice in delivering legal services to its clients.

As an employer

The Office is committed to being a workplace that is inclusive, diverse and respects the human rights and equality of our staff. We are committed to working with the wider Civil Service and the Public Appointments Service to find ways to achieve a workforce representative of the diverse society in which we live.

To support us in complying with the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, the Office will implement the Diversity and Equality Codes and Policies developed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Office will undertake to make employees and managers aware of the rights and responsibilities under these policies and codes.

The Office is committed to developing and implementing improved measures to support the employment of individuals with disabilities, and to meet its public sector obligations under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005. We will provide a building and workplace that are physically accessible to everyone. The Office has appointed Disability Liaison Officers who are available to assist and support staff with disabilities.

We prioritise the wellbeing and mental health of our staff.



Programme for Government

We are committed to supporting the Government in the implementation of the Programme for Government - “Our Shared Future”.

The Programme commits to undertaking constitutional reform in a number of key areas and, to that end, contemplates holding a number of referenda.

The Programme further contemplates undertaking numerous individual legislative projects, for both the enactment of new legislation and for extensive review and reform of existing legislation.

The Office anticipates that achieving many of the other strategic priorities of Government will require a legislative, legal and/or organisational response.

The Office will identify the need for, and seek to deploy, all resources available to it to facilitate the Government in the pursuit of its strategic priorities.



Climate action

We are committed to supporting the Government’s climate action strategies.

As a service provider

We will provide all legal advisory, legislative drafting, litigation and transactional services to client Departments which may be required to support the implementation of policies and actions associated with their climate action targets.

As an office

The Office must adapt its own work practices to reduce our environmental impact. We are committed to pursuing green policies in the conduct of our business and the management of our offices, for example through initiatives to reduce energy consumption, to reduce the use of paper and plastics, to increase recycling and to reduce the carbon footprint attributable to travel to and from the workplace.



Challenges in a changing environment

2020 has been a year of significant challenges. An ambitious Programme for Government has been agreed by the tri-party Government against the backdrop of unparalleled social and economic change arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing challenges posed by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

The Office has had to significantly adapt in order to facilitate remote working and develop new ways in which to deliver its services in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic; some of these challenges have been met, while others remain. Notwithstanding these radical changes, the Office must continue to be available to assist the Government in implementing its strategic priorities as effectively and efficiently as possible in the face of new and existing challenges.

In the course of developing this Strategy, we undertook internal staff consultation and targeted engagement with key client Departments and Offices.

We have identified a number of key challenges which will impact our operating environment and the way we deliver legal services over the lifetime of this Statement of Strategy:

- **Covid-19:** the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's response to it will continue to raise a myriad of new legal issues, and is likely to require a significant

and sustained response, both in terms of legislation preparation and consequential litigation. In addition to the challenge of managing this new work stream, remote working will continue to present ongoing challenges in how the Office engages both internally and externally in the provision of its services. Integrating and training new staff and maintaining files are aspects of remote working which present a particular challenge for the Office.

- **Brexit:** while significant work has been undertaken across Government to prepare for the immediate impacts of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, the full effects of the United Kingdom's withdrawal are uncertain and are likely to be felt for many years to come. Among the potential challenges which will arise for the Office are an increased demand for legal advice and new legislation in connection with the common travel area and our new relationship with the United Kingdom.
- **European Union:** the volume of legislation emanating from the EU is an ongoing challenge for Government and this Office alike. There is likely to be a need for greater resources to be channelled into the State's engagement at EU level having regard in particular to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU. It will be a challenge for the Office to continue to effectively support Government and client Departments in connection with the development of legislation at European level and intervention in matters before the European courts.

- **Climate and environment:** the Programme for Government places significant emphasis on initiatives to address the climate and biodiversity crisis, which will require innovative legal and legislative solutions.
- **Expanding scope of legal services:** the breadth and scope of legal expertise required to meet the needs of Government is expanding rapidly.
- **Technology:** the Office will face an ongoing challenge to harness new technology and effectively integrate it into our work practices to ensure we can continue to deliver our services in a changing environment.
- **The economy:** as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the State has entered into economic recession and the Programme for Government contemplates an ambitious plan for “Reigniting and Renewing the Economy”. This will impact on the nature of the legal services required by Government over the lifetime of the strategy and the Office must respond to those evolving needs.
- **Recruitment and retention:** the Office must continue to address the challenge of recruiting, developing and retaining staff of the highest calibre in a highly competitive marketplace.
- **Competitive environment:** over the lifetime of the strategy the Office must continue to provide a service that competes with legal services providers in a highly competitive legal services market.



Our strategy

Our strategy has been developed through targeted engagement with key client Departments, internal consultation across the constituent parts of the Office and an intensive examination of the environment in which we operate.

This reflects a driving force of our strategy which is to work closely with each other across the legal and non-legal teams within the Office, each of which provides vital and expert services, and with Government clients in pursuit of a common objective of delivering on our mission and vision. We recognise the need to be sufficiently flexible and agile to allow us to respond to the current and future legal needs of Government Departments and Offices and changes in the external environment. We are committed to adopting innovative approaches to meeting those needs where appropriate and developing our people and our organisation.

Over the lifetime of this Statement of Strategy, the Office will monitor and review its performance and progress towards the achievement of its goals and objectives.

We will pursue four key strategic goals:







Strategic Goal 1 Serve our clients

To deliver a specialist legal service that meets our clients' needs

Objectives	Actions
 <p>Deliver a specialist legal advisory service that meets our clients' needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and update areas of specialism and expertise to respond to external factors and client needs - Keep abreast of developments in the legal environment in both the public and private sector - Continue to support, enhance and expand our Secondment Programme, reviewing its future operation in order to meet the needs of the Office and clients
<p>Deliver a specialist legislative drafting service that gives effect to Government policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft Government Bills set out in the Government Legislation Programme, together with such other urgent Bills as may be required by Government from time to time, and such statutory instruments as are required by the Cabinet Handbook - Engage with the Government Legislation Committee to assist in the implementation of the Government Legislation Programme in accordance with Government priorities - Optimise co-ordination with clients to efficiently manage legislative projects in accordance with Government policy and procedures, including the Cabinet Handbook
<p>Provide a solution-driven legal service led by the CSSO that supports the delivery of our clients' transactional and business objectives in the fields of conveyancing, property, public procurement and commercial contracts law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leverage our experience and legal knowledge to design and develop practical solutions that meet the particular needs of our clients - Encourage a collaborative approach to problem solving - Promote a shared understanding of risk in seeking solutions for our clients - Promote awareness of legal costs and collaborate with clients to reduce the legal cost burden on the State

	Objectives	Actions
	Provide a litigation service that delivers optimum results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve proactive case management including through early dispute resolution in litigation - Establish procedures for dealing with multi-client litigation to ensure timely instructions
	In light of our increased role post-Brexit, deliver an enhanced EU law service to our clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that significant EU law issues are tracked and coordinated across the Office - Provide early advice to clients on interventions before the Court of Justice and on EU projects and policy proposals - Encourage client Departments to engage with Seconded Advisory Counsel and the Office on the negotiation and development of legislation at EU level, to assist in the identification of domestic legal issues which may arise from legislative proposals - Promote early engagement by clients with the Office on the transposition of EU measures
	Enhance clients' knowledge of, and access to, the Offices' services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplify procedures for access to our services - Develop initiatives to improve clients' understanding of Office procedures and the services we provide - Provide information to clients to clarify the roles of Parliamentary Counsel, Advisory Counsel, Seconded Advisory Counsel, Seconded State Solicitors and the CSSO
	Promote the concept of the State as "Model Litigant"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate with clients on the role of the State as "Model Litigant" in the context of litigation - Develop an internal protocol enumerating the practices which comprise "Model Litigant" behaviour



Strategic Goal 2 Build relationships

To improve the way we work and how we provide our services by building good relationships both internally and externally

	Objectives	Actions
	Build stronger connections with our clients and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adopt structured engagement with clients to improve our understanding of our clients' policy objectives and requirements- Engage in a solution-focused and collaborative manner with our clients, including through the client relationship officer initiative- Leverage the benefits of in-house legal units in Departments to build client connections- Harness new technological solutions to deepen client engagement- Develop initiatives to strengthen our relationships with stakeholders
	Raise the knowledge platform for our clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enhance mutual understanding between our people and our clients to deliver the best legal service possible- Collaborate with our clients to heighten awareness of legal issues and processes- Develop additional programmes to provide training, information and knowledge sharing to clients- Promote clients' awareness of litigation conduct which exemplifies the principle of the State as "Model Litigant"
	Promote early engagement with clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourage early engagement between clients and stakeholders, particularly where multiple clients and/or stakeholders are involved- Facilitate early engagement between clients and Seconded Advisory Counsel and/or the Office as appropriate

	Objectives	Actions
	Strengthen links with Seconded Advisory Counsel and Seconded State Solicitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deepen relationships between Seconded Advisory Counsel, Seconded State Solicitors in Departments and the Office, including through regular attendance at meetings and Office events
	Deepen communication and collaboration across the Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that Seconded Advisory Counsel and Seconded State Solicitors are kept up to date on developments in the Office - Collaborate through inter-Office committees and initiatives - Enhance information-sharing between our people in the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU and European institutions and the wider Office



Strategic Goal 3 Build capacity

To be a modern, agile and dynamic legal office and to build sustainable capacity for the benefit of our clients and our people

	Objectives	Actions
	Provide ICT solutions that support our people in delivering the required level of service to clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide effective remote access solutions- Review and optimise the Offices' existing technologies and explore the potential of other available technologies to improve the efficiency of the business operations of the Office- Maintain highly effective knowledge management systems- Update and improve online access to Irish legislation through the electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB)- Review and improve the case management system
	Recruit and retain high calibre staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Further develop, update and embed HR strategies encompassing workforce planning, effective recruitment, and remote working- Promote gender balance in our organisation and monitor gender balance in our retention of outside service providers- Invest in our staff to maximise their potential and to help retain their expertise in a competitive legal marketplace
	Enhance the Office's governance and risk management culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintain a proactive Risk Management Committee- Involve our people in the Offices' risk management strategy and processes- Maintain and update Corporate Governance Frameworks
	Increase efficiencies in the delivery of our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Emphasise the importance of Departments fully formulating and developing legislative policy proposals prior to engaging the services of the OPC- Publish written procedures on the respective roles and responsibilities of Parliamentary Counsel, Advisory Counsel and Seconded Advisory Counsel during the drafting process



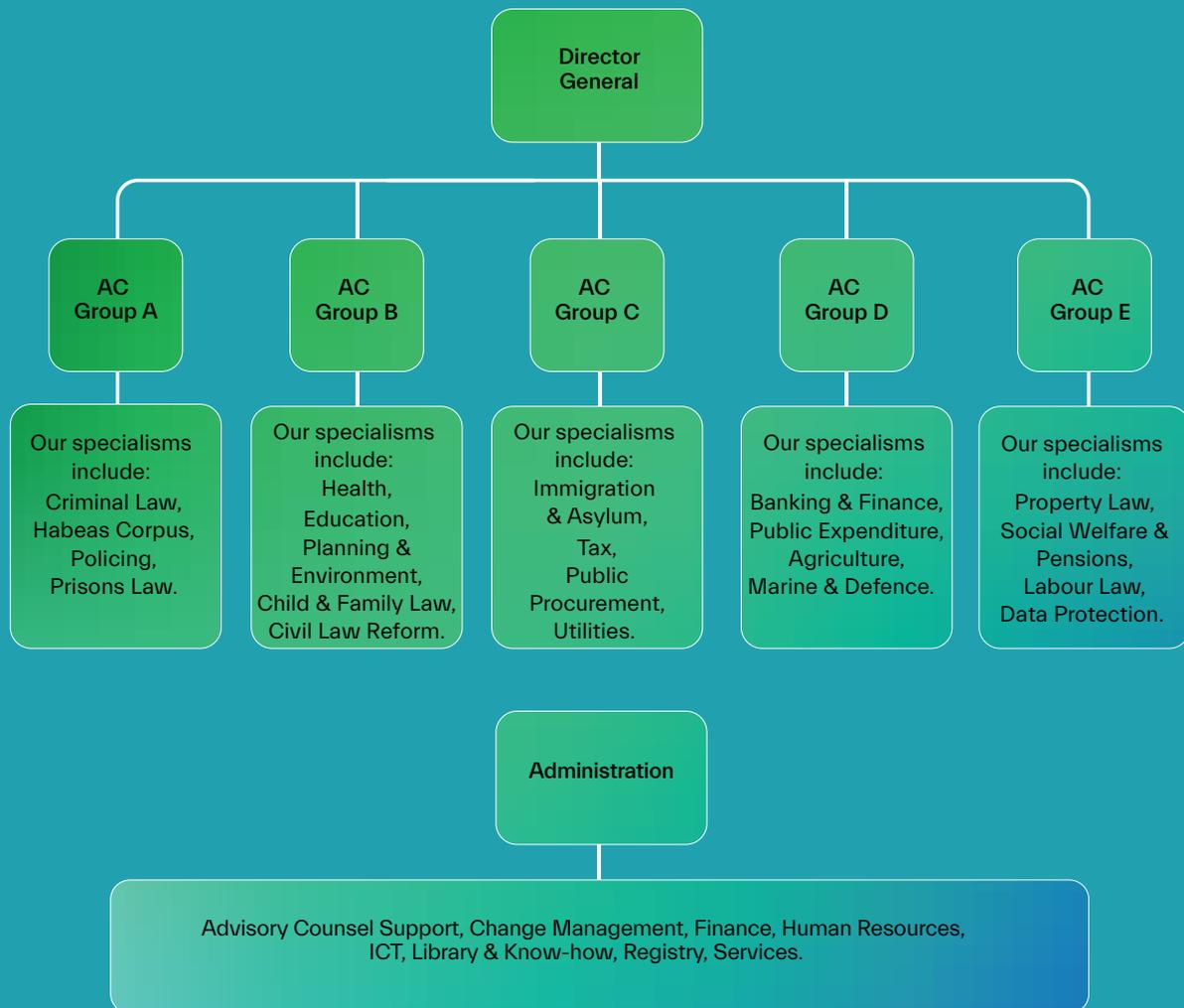
Strategic Goal 4 Support our people

To support our people so that they can perform to the best of their abilities and effectively collaborate to deliver an excellent service to our clients

	Objectives	Actions
	Promote a culture of respect, dignity, equality and diversity in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that the values which underpin this Statement of Strategy are evident in the workplace - Continue to further develop and embed the professional, specialist nature of our HR function, to provide positive support for our people allowing us to optimise the service we provide to our clients
	Promote excellence through leadership, performance management and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the development of our people’s soft skills to enable us to provide our service as effectively as possible - Ensure that our people are supported in achieving the goals set as part of the performance management and development system - Facilitate the development and roll-out of mentoring programmes - Facilitate a wide range of secondment opportunities for our people
	Support our people through enhanced knowledge management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain a high quality, proactive legal library and Office intranet as key information sources with increased online accessibility - Share training events within the Offices
	Promote a positive work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with our people regularly, including through civil service staff engagement initiatives - Promote initiatives that reinforce and emphasise our culture throughout the Office - Support flexible working options
	Promote environmentally sustainable work practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harness technologies that can reduce our reliance on paper - Encourage our people to pursue “green” initiatives
	Optimise internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and adapt internal communications policies and practices to optimise communication

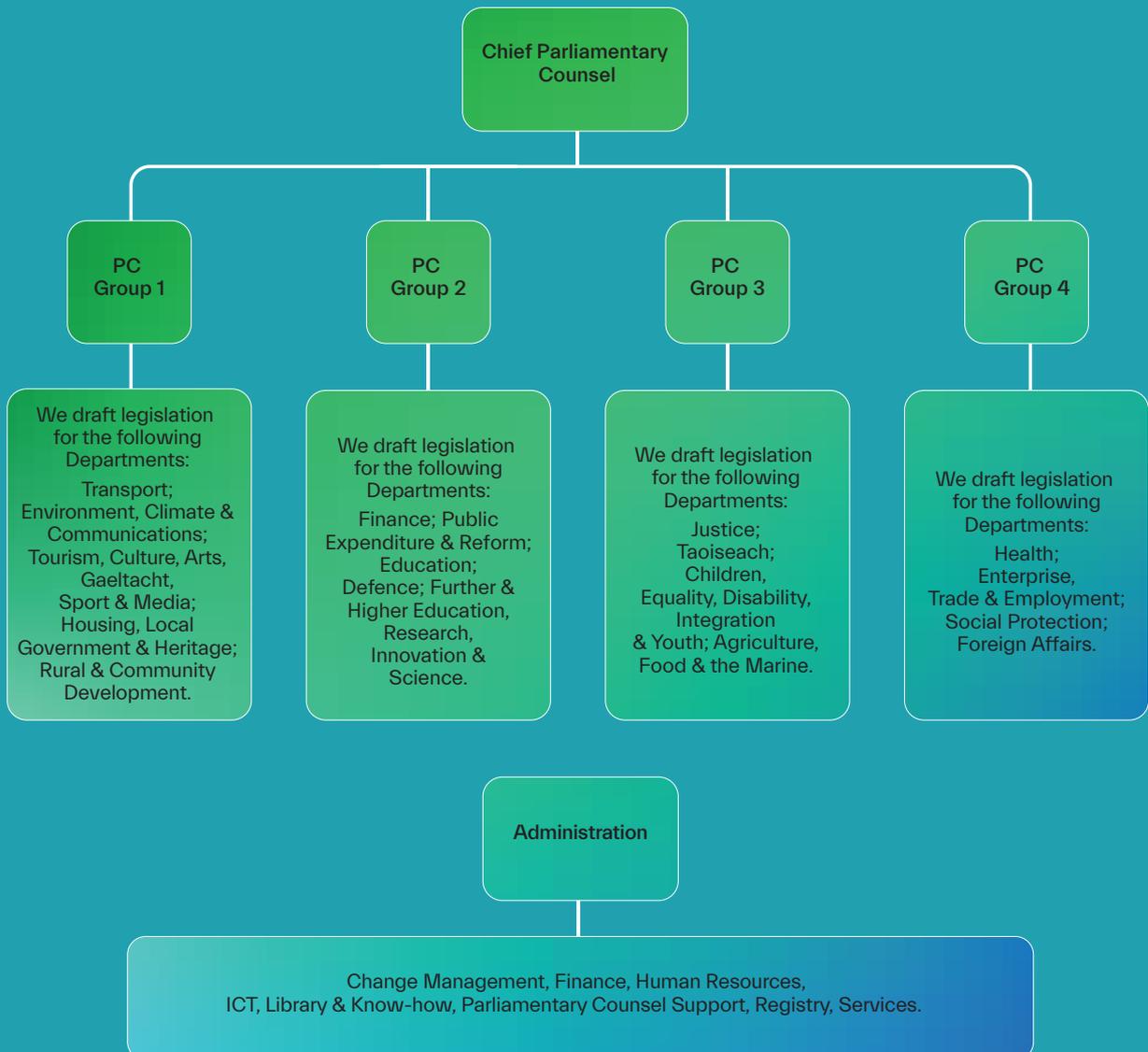
How we work

Advisory Counsel



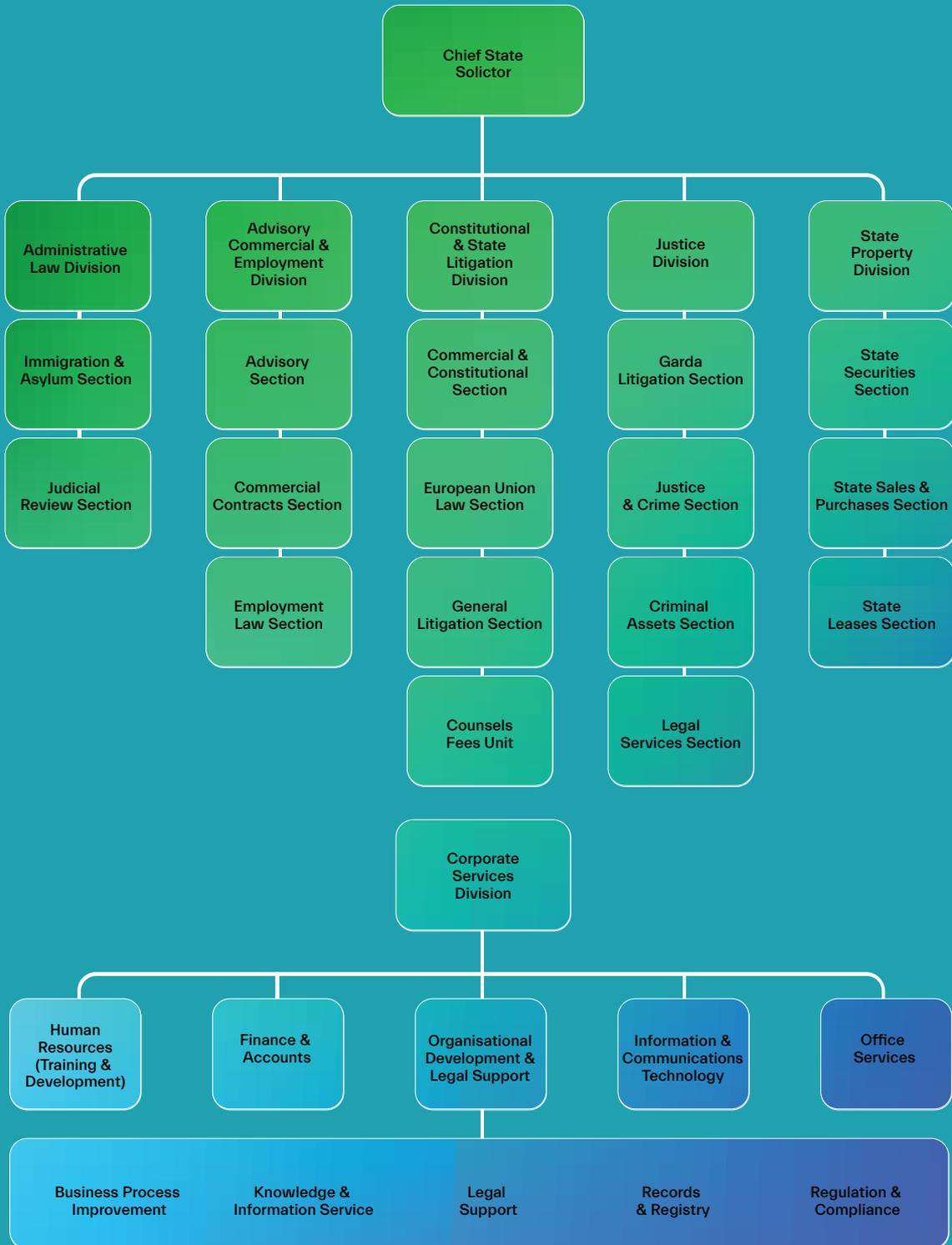
How we work

Parliamentary Counsel



How we work

Chief State Solicitor's Office





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