



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

129th COMMISSION MEETING (Governance)

**HELD ON MONDAY 27 JUNE 2011 AT 10.00AM
AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH ST, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Monica McWilliams, Chief Commissioner
Geraldine Rice
Colin Harvey
Alan Henry
Ann Hope

In attendance: Virginia McVea, Director
Ciaran Ó Maoláin, Head of Legal Services Policy
and Research
David Russell Head of Communication and
Education

Apologies: Tom Duncan
Don Leeson
Bill Smith

The Commission noted with sadness the death of Kader Asmal.

The Commission wished to minute thanks to Conor McCarthy for his work with the Commission.

**1. Minutes of the 128th Commission (Policy) meeting
(HRC129.1)**

- 1.1 The previous minutes 127th to be amended to show Commissioner Geraldine Rice was in attendance. Minutes of the 127th Commission meeting agreed

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 128th Commission (Policy) meeting

- 2.1 The transfer of pay arrangements to the equivalent Civil Service rates had taken place. Staff have been informed of the transfer and pension details(para 2.3 of the 128th Commission meeting refers).
- 2.2 The timetable for the business objective of dealing with legacy issues from the conflict by hosting roundtables with various stakeholders has been reviewed and this will now take place in the latter part of 2011 (para 2.8 of the 128th Commission meeting refers)
- 2.3 The Annual Report was due to be laid before Parliament pending the signature of the Secretary of State (para 3.1. and 3.2 of the 128th Commission meeting refers).
- 2.4 An update was provided on the dispute concerning legal aid fees and criminal work in Northern Ireland. The Chief Commissioner advised of press work, including television interviews. A further update would be provided at the next Commission meeting (para 8.1 of the 128th commission meeting refers).

3. Charter of Rights for the Island of Ireland

- 3.1 The Commission noted the successful launch of the All Ireland Charter Advices and the Tánaiste's commendation of the work of the Joint committee.
- 3.2 The Commission's additional report on Equivalency of Convention rights in Ireland and Northern Ireland was noted.

4. United Nations Accreditation

- 4.1 The Commission has been reaccredited by the ICC of the UN's Accreditation Committee with 'A' status. The work involved in the submission was commended.

- 4.2 Press work on securing the reaccreditation would be undertaken as appropriate.

5. Report on Prison Visits

- 5.1 The Chief Commissioner provided an update on a prison visit to Marion Price who is being held in Maghaberry Prison and a visit to Roe House where a number of those in the separated regime have engaged in a dirty protest. The Chief Commissioner briefed Commissioners on the subsequent meeting with the Minister of Justice.
- 5.2 Further updates were provided on National Preventive Mechanism visits by the CJINI and IMB. The Commission was advised that the Prisoner Ombudsman is investigating a number of complaints from the separated regime in Roe House. The Chief Commissioner outlined the frequency of meetings with the Prisoner Ombudsman and CJINI given the heightened levels of concern in relation to prisons in Northern Ireland at present. Issues were also raised about the lack of privacy afforded to a Roe House prisoner by prison security staff during a recent clinical examination at the Cancer clinic at the City Hospital. Discussions between the Chief Commissioner, the consultant oncologist and the prison service have helped to resolve the situation. The prisoner was subsequently released on bail.

6. Update on the work of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- 6.1 The Commission was advised that the Chief Commissioner had attended the JCHR at Westminster along with the UK's CRPD Joint Mechanism representatives including the Chief Commissioner of ECNI. Evidence was presented on disability issues particularly relating to independent living issues.

7. Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the UK Commission

- 7.1 An update was provided on the recently established UK Commission. Commissioners discussed the need to engage with the body.

8. Report of the Audit and risk Committee from 13th May

- 8.1 Commissioner Ann Hope presented the Audit and Risk Committee report to the Commission.

9. Legal costs and inquests

- 9.1 Commissioners discussed support of key inquest cases and the management of the costs of these cases. The Commission was advised of communication with solicitors instructed in the case and agreed that confirmation of the limit of Commission resources for the cases must be obtained.

10. Prompt payments

- 10.1 The Commission noted commendation to staff and in particular Lorraine Hamill for prompt payment of 100% of transactions within 5 working days.

12. Partnership report with the CRC

- 12.1 The completion of the Community Relations Council partnership report with the NIHRC was noted.

13. Website- new guide

- 13.1 Commissioners were advised that a short guide to the HRA had been prepared for the website.

14. Update on Atlantic Philanthropy bid

- 14.1 The Commission awaited NIO approval so that a bid for funds could be prepared for the AP September grant consideration meeting.

15. Update on Annual Review

- 15.1 Commissioners were advised that the new Annual Review was being finalised.

16. Handover to new Commission

- 16.1 Commissioners discussed the preparation of a statement of achievements during their term of office which would be considered at the next Commission meeting.

17. Update on legal matters (HRC129.6)

- 17.1 The legal team were currently seeking agreement from the NIHE in relation to traveller accommodation.

18. Corporation Tax update of briefing paper

18.1 Commissioners were advised that the NIHRC briefing paper on Corporation tax had been supported by a range of NGOs in a recent roundtable briefing.

19. Any other business

19.1 A recent visit of a delegation from Kosovo had taken place.

19.2 The submission to the Youth Justice Review had been completed and the work of staff was commended.

19.3 The Chief Commissioner requested confirmation that all major events attended by staff would be recorded through a short briefing paper for use as corporate information.

19.4 The Chief Commissioner advised the Commission of a recent meeting with the Justice Weir in relation to his concerns on the service of domestic violence orders following PSNI proposals to withdraw from the serving of non-molestation and occupation orders.

19.5 The Commission discussed the Prisons Review team interim report and the recent NIPS severance plan.

19.6 FOI requests were noted

The meeting closed at 2pm.

Approved by: _____

Date: _____