

**147th COMMISSION MEETING**

**HELD ON MONDAY 25 MARCH 2013 AT 9.00AM AT THE OFFICES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

**Present:** Professor Michael O’Flaherty, Chief Commissioner

Christine Collins *(from 9.15am)*

John Corey

Alan McBride

Milton Kerr

Marion Reynolds *(from 9.20am)*

Paul Yam

**In Attendance:** Virginia McVea, Director

David Russell, Deputy Director *(from 9.15am)*

Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Administration Manager *(Agenda items 1-9)*

Claire Martin, Communications Worker

Angela Stevens, Caseworker *(Agenda item 9)*

Colin Caughey, Policy Worker *(Agenda item 10)*

Kyra Hild, Researcher *(Agenda item 10)*

**Apologies:** Grainia Long

**1. Minutes of the 146th Meeting held on 18 February 2013 (HRC 147.1)**

1.1 The minutes of the 146th Meeting held on 18 February 2013 were adopted subject to minor amendments.

**2. Matter arising**

2.1 It was agreed that the Chief Commissioner would send a letter to the family of former Commissioner Inez McCormack informing them that the Commissioners observed a minutes silence in remembrance (paragraph 3.1 of the previous meeting refers)

**Action: Chief Commissioner**

2.2 It was noted that Commissioner Corey had attended an event on 23 March 2013 to celebrate the life and work of Inez. The President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins and the former President, Mary Robinson addressed the event which was held in Belfast.

**3. Chief Commissioner Report (HRC147.2)**

3.1 Commissioners noted the Chief Commissioner’s report on his meetings since the last Commission meeting. These included:

* Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of the House of Commons on the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous) Provisions Bill
* Outreach day in South Belfast
* Turks and Caicos Islands working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Office of the Turks and Caicos Human Rights Commission
* Brookings Institute
* American Bar Association

3.2 Commissioners noted that the Chief Commissioner had invited representatives from the Turks and Caicos Islands Human Rights Commission to visit Northern Ireland.

3.3 It was noted that the Commission had been invited by Susan Davis to provide a human rights component to a conference being held in Northern Ireland in the summer on Women in Business.

**4. Commissioner Report**

4.1 Commissioner Alan McBride reported on the meeting he and two staff attended with Families Against Supergrass Trials (FAST) on 21 February 2013 and confirmed he was available to attend similar events in the future.

4.2 Commissioner Paul Yam attended the Children’s Law Centre Lecture.

4.3 Commissioner Christine Collins reported on the Rare Disease event held in Dublin and confirmed that the event would be held in Belfast in 2014. It was agreed that the Director and a member of staff would liaise with Commissioner Collins to provide a human rights aspect for the conference.

**Action: Commissioner Collins and Director to meet to**

**discuss**

**5. Director’s Report (HRC147.3)**

5.1 Commissioners noted the Director’s Report.

5.2 The Director confirmed that the draft internal audit report on IT, Information Security and Business Continuity Planning would be discussed at the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting which was taking place that afternoon.

5.3 Commissioners noted that the interim external audit had taken place during the week commencing 4 March 2013 and there was nothing of significance to report.

5.4 Commissioners noted that the Bahrain Human Rights Commission would like to visit the Commission towards the end of the year.

5.5 Commissioners agreed to support a proposal from the Irish Human Rights Commission for a half day roundtable event to mark the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

*The meeting closed at 10.30am and reconvened at 10.40am.*

**6. Quarterly Report against the Business Plan (HRC147.4)**

6.1 Commissioners discussed the quarterly report against the Business Plan for the final quarter of 2012-13.

6.2 It was agreed that there should be a more systemic approach when engaging with local government with regard to community engagements. Commissioners agreed to discuss this further at the May Commission meeting.

**Action: Engagement with local**

**government**

**re community**

**engagements to be an agenda item for the May Commission meeting**

6.3 The Quarterly Report against the Business Plan was adopted subject to amendments.

**7. Strategic Plan (HRC147.5)**

7.1 It was agreed that the Commissioners would adopt the Strategic Plan paragraph by paragraph.

7.2 Introduction – adopted.

7.3 How we see ourselves – adopted as amended.

7.4 Our Mission Statement – adopted.

7.5 Our Principles – Legality and Independence – adopted.

7.6 Our Principles – Non-discrimination and equality – adopted.

7.7 Our Principles – The equal status of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights – adopted.

7.8 Our Principles – Participation – adopted.

7.9 Our Principles – Accountability – adopted as amended.

7.10 Our Principles – Partnership – adopted as amended.

7.11 Our Principles – Building a culture of human rights – adopted.

7.12 Pillar One: Human Rights and Good Governance – adopted.

7.13 Pillar One: Actions – adopted as amended.

7.14 Pillar One: Outcomes – adopted as amended.

7.15 Pillar Two: Human Rights and the Conflict – adopted.

7.16 Pillar Two: Actions – adopted as amended.

7.17 Pillar Two: Outcomes – adopted.

7.18 Pillar Three: Protecting Human Rights in a Time of Austerity – adopted.

7.19 Pillar Three: Actions – adopted.

7.20 Pillar Three: Outcomes – adopted.

7.21 Implementing our Mission 2013-16 – adopted as amended.

7.22 It was agreed that the Strategic Plan for 2013-16 should be launched after Easter.

**Action: Date to be agreed for**

**the launch of the Strategic Plan for 2013-16**

7.23 The Chief Commissioner will write formally to the Secretary of State, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and other Ministers providing them with a copy of the Strategic Plan.

**Action: Chief Commissioner**

**to formally write to**

**Secretary of State etc enclosing**

**Strategic Plan**

**8. Business Plan 2013-14 (HRC147.6)**

8.1 Commissioners discussed the Business Plan 2013-14 and it was agreed that they would adopt by page from page 10 onwards.

8.2 Pillar One – adopted and amended as per Strategic Plan.

8.3 Pillar One: In-year targets – adopted as amended.

8.4 Pillar Two – adopted and amended as per Strategic Plan.

8.5 Pillar Two: In-year targets – adopted as amended.

8.6 Pillar Three – adopted.

8.7 Pillar Three: In-year targets – adopted as amended.

8.8 Corporate: In-year targets – adopted as amended.

*The meeting closed at 12.55pm and reconvened at 1.30pm.*

8.9 Budget 2013-14 – adopted.

8.10 It was agreed that the draft Corporate Schedule which was a snapshot of how the Business Plan would look in the 3 year cycle would be discussed at the next Commission meeting scheduled to take place on Monday 29 April 2013.

**Action: Draft Corporate Schedule to be an agenda item at 29 April 2013 meeting**

**9. Functions Report including Legal Application (HRC147.8)**

9.1 Commissioners discussed the Functions Report.

9.2 Commissioners noted that a member of the Judiciary had been identified for interview as part of the investigation into hate crime.

9.3 The draft report on the Investigation into Hate Crime is to be circulated to Commissioners.

**Action: Director**

9.4 Commissioners noted the work progress on advice to government and in particular:

* Equal Civil Marriage and response from Maria Miller
* Draft Disability Strategy
* The Commission’s initial response to the consultation ‘Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in Northern Ireland’
* The recommendation from the Committee for Justice that the offence of Scandalising the Court be repealed within the Criminal Justice Bill.  
   **Action: Commission to consider future use of Lord Lester’s advice**
  1. Commissioners considered the consultation on overseas visitors’ access to health services in Northern Ireland.
  2. Commissioners reviewed the new addition in the functions report, for information, of future advice to government and the inclusion of website addresses.
  3. Commissioners noted progress on Treaty reporting.
  4. Commissioners discussed the community engagement and it was noted that an innovative pilot project of engagement with local schools would be part of the visit in Newtownabbey.
  5. Commissioners acknowledged that the community engagement in South Belfast was a great success. It was agreed to send thank you letters to the groups involved.  
      **Action: Thank you letters to be   
      sent to community groups**
  6. It was agreed that the first phase of the Northern Ireland Civil Service training programme ‘An Introduction to Human Rights’ would be shared with Commissioners.

**Action: Share training programme with**

**Commissioners**

* 1. Commissioners noted that the launch of the Education Report would take place on Monday 8 April 2013 at Queen’s University Belfast.
  2. Commissioners noted that an outcome from the recent meeting with the NI Editors Group resulted in the Chief Commissioner writing an opinion piece on the Good Friday Agreement.
  3. Commissioners considered the briefing paper on ‘The Duties of the State to Members of the Irish Traveller Community in Respect of Accommodation’ and in particular the potential for future violations of Protocol 1, Article 1.

*Angela Stevens, Caseworker joined the meeting. As there was a conflict of interest regarding the legal application Commissioner Alan McBride left the meeting.*

* 1. Commissioners considered the legal application and it was agreed that the Commission would not grant assistance.
  2. It was agreed that the Caseworker would write to the applicant to inform him/her of the Commission’s decision.

**Action: Caseworker to write to**

**Applicant to inform of**

**Commission decision**

*Angela Stevens, Caseworker left the meeting and Commissioner Alan McBride re-joined the meeting.*

* 1. It was agreed that the Director would seek approval from the NIO to submit a business case for funding for the City of Culture event to be held in Derry/Londonderry in July 2013.

**Action: Director to contact  
 NIO for approval**

**of Business Case**

**10. CAT Parallel Report (HRC147.9)**

10.1 Commissioners discussed the Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture.

10.2 The Chief Commissioner wished it to be noted that the submission was an exceptional piece of work and that staff were to be congratulated.

10.3 Commissioners were asked to submit any comments on the Submission to the Director within the next 48 hours.

**Action: Commissioners to submit comments to the Director within the next 48 hours**

**11. Procurement Paper (HRC147.10)**

11.1 Commissioners discussed the Public Procurement and Human Rights Northern Ireland paper.

11.2 Commissioners were asked to provide any comments on the paper to the Deputy Director by close of play on Monday 1 April 2013.

**Action: Commissioner to**

**provide comments**

**to the Deputy**

**Director by 1 April**

**12. Discussion on Community Engagement**

12.1 This agenda item was postponed and will be discussed at a future Commission meeting.

**Action: Community Engagement to be**

**discussed at**

**future Commission**

**meeting**

**13. Review of Derry Outreach (HRC147.11)**

13.1 This agenda item was postponed and will be discussed at a future Commission meeting.

**Action: Review of Derry Outreach to be**

**discussed at**

**future Commission**

**meeting**

**14. Human Rights and Budget Analysis Paper (HRC147.12)**

14.1 Commissioners discussed the paper The Programme for Government and the Right to Adequate Housing.

14.2 Commissioners were asked to provide any comments on the report within two weeks.

**Action: Commissioners to**

**provide comments by 8 April.**

**15. Parliamentary Report (HRC147.13)**

15.1 Commissioners noted the Parliamentary Report.

**16.** This agenda item was discussed in a closed minute.

*The meeting closed at 4.20pm.*

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_