

**148th COMMISSION MEETING**

**HELD ON MONDAY 29 APRIL 2013 AT 10.00AM 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

Grainia Long

Alan McBride

Milton Kerr

John Corey

Paul Yam

Marion Reynolds

Christine Collins

**In attendance:** Virginia McVea, Director

David Russell, Deputy Director

Claire Martin, Communications Worker

Rebecca Magee, Executive Assistant

Colin Caughey, Policy Worker (*Agenda item 7*)

Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker (*Agenda item 7*)

Kyra Hild, Researcher (*Agenda item 7*)

Angela Stevens, Caseworker (*Agenda items 8+10*)

Laura Curran, Intern (*Agenda item 8*)

**Apologies:** None

**1. Minutes of the 147th Meeting held on 25 March 2013 (HRC 148.1)**

1. The minutes of the 147th meeting were adopted.

**2. Matters arising**

2.1 It was agreed that the Director would contact the Irish Human Rights Commission to arrange a date for the first Joint Committee with the newly appointed board of interim Commissioners at the Irish Human Rights Commission (paragraph 5.5 of the last meeting refers).

**Action: The list of the new Irish Commissioners is to be shared.**

2.2 Commissioners were given an update on the dissemination of the Strategic Plan. Commissioners were also updated on responses to the plan that have received through the Commissions social media networks. Commissioners agreed to a PDF version of the Plan being published (paragraph 7.22 of the last meeting refers).

**3. Chief Commissioner report**

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

* Minster of Education, John O’Dowd MP
* Meeting of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Prevention of Torture Subgroup
* Baroness Warsi, Human Rights Minister, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
* Participation in forum on ‘The Good Friday Agreement: 15th Anniversary’, British Academy
* Meetings with Lord Dubs, Lord Brown and Baroness O’Neill
* Meeting with Andrea Coomber, Director of JUSTICE
* Meeting with Malcolm McKibben, Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service
* A joint meeting between the Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland with the leaders of the 4 main churches

3.2 It was noted by Commissioners that the Commission had been invited by Minister O’Dowd to brief his senior staff on Shared Education; a meeting with the Permanent Secretary has been arranged.

**4. Commissioner report**

4.1 Commissioner John Corey reported on the Roma Community Group event that he attended with staff. The Chief Commissioner thanked Commissioner Corey for speaking at the event.

4.2 Commissioner Marion Reynolds reported on the Stakeholder group on Prisoner Mental Health event that she attended. Part of the event involved prisoners giving feedback on the health care they have received in prison. Commissioner Reynolds shared with the Commissioners information she had received from serving prisoners on issues arising from health care.

4.3 Commissioner Christine Collins reported on a meeting she attended with staff with representatives of the REAL Network.

4.4 Commissioner Alan McBride reported on speaking at the Human Rights Consortium AGM and the CAJ conference.

**5. Review of Human Rights based approach to Strategic Planning (HRC148.2)**

5.1 Commissioners noted the Review of Human Rights based approach to Strategic Planning paper.

5.2 Commissioners noted that the purpose of the Strategic plan is to have self-analysis and accountability.

5.3 Commissioners agreed to do a mid-year review of whether strategic objectives are met.

5.4 Commissioners thanked staff for their help and involvement in the Strategic Planning process.

**Action: The Director will prepare a more substantial paper for possible dissemination.**

**6. Corporate Plan (HRC148.3)**

6.1 Commissioners noted the Corporate Plan document.

6.2 Commissioners discussed the proposed outcomes of the Pillars within the Strategic Plan and the proposed time frame within years 1-3 that the actions will be considered and completed.

6.3 Commissioners expressed appreciation to the Director for her extensive work on this document as it is an innovative piece of work.

**Action: The Director to take account of comments in finalising of document.**

**7. Flags (HRC148.4)**

7.1 Commissioners noted the Flags paper.

7.2 Commissioners noted that this paper is an update to the paper ‘Flag Flying: Briefing paper on Human Rights Compliance and Commission Policy’ from February 2011.

7.3 Commissioners agreed that this version of the paper’ The Display of Flags, Symbols and Emblems in Northern Ireland’ would be used as a technical tool for Human Rights Legislation in this area.

*The Commission meeting closed at 12:45 to meet with Baroness Randerson, the House of Lords Spokesperson for the Northern Ireland Office over lunch.*

*The Commission meeting resumed at 2:00. Colin Caughey, Policy Worker, Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker and Kyra Hild, Researcher joined the meeting. Commissioner Collins left the meeting.*

7.4 Commissioners discussed the use of the paper as a technical tool with staff.

7.5 Commissioners agreed that scenarios were to be added to help with explanatory evidence in the technical tool.

7.6 Commissioners acknowledged the extensive work of the staff members involved in the writing of this paper.

**Action: A further draft is to be considered.**

*Colin Caughey, Policy Worker, Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker and Kyra Hild, Researcher left the meeting at 2:15.*

**8. Transitional Justice (HRC148.5)**

8.1 Commissioners noted the Transitional Justice Paper.

8.2 Commissioners discussed the definition of ‘Victim’ and ‘Combatant’. Commissioners agreed that clarification as needed as to the origin of the definition currently being used.

8.3 Commissioners discussed the two main functions of the paper – 1, to advise Government and 2, to show the Commissions focus on Transitional Justice within its strategic priorities for the next three years.

8.4 Commissioners discussed the substance of the paper and agreed to amendments with the Deputy Director.

8.5 Commissioners noted the Compendium of Past Action paper that was attached to the Transitional Justice paper.

*Angela Stevens, Caseworker and Laura Curran, Intern joined the meeting at 3:15.*

8.6 Commissioners discussed the paper with staff.

8.7 Commissioners discussed publication of the document and agreed that both the Transitional Justice document and the Compendium of Past Action will be made available on the website once finalised.

8.8 Commissioners commended the staff involved in the paper and expressed further thanks to Laura Curran, Intern for her extensive work on the Compendium of Past Action which is a very valuable and important document to the Commissions history and very timely.

**Action: A final draft to be considered by email.**

*Laura Curran, Intern left the meeting at 3:30.*

**9. Culture and Human Rights (HRC148.6)**

9.1 Commissioners noted the Culture and Human Rights paper.

9.2 The Director advised of very limited funds for travel and accommodation.

9.3 Commissioners discussed with the Director the planned event in Londonderry/Derry in July for the City of Culture event.

9.4 Commissioners thanked the Director and Deputy Director for their extensive work on securing funding for the event.

9.5 Commissioners agreed that Commissioner Milton Kerr would play an important part in the event.

**10. Legal Applications (HRC148.7)**

*As there was a conflict of interest regarding one of the legal applications Commissioner Alan McBride left the meeting.*

10.1 Commissioners discussed the legal application HR5172.

10.2 Commissioners agreed that there was no basis to reopen the case involved and agreed to not grant assistance.

10.3 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 the Commission decision.**

*Commissioner Alan McBride re-joined to the meeting.*

10.4 Commissioners discussed the legal application HR2791.

10.5 Commissioners agreed that this case is outside of the scope of the Commissions legal priorities and agreed to not grant assistance.

10.6 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 the Commission decision.**

10.7 Commissioners discussed the legal application HR5663.

10.8 Commissioners agreed to observe this case in court.

10.9 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 the Commission decision.**

*Angela Stevens, Caseworker left the meeting at 4:00.*

*Commissioner Marion Reynolds left the meeting at 4:00.*

**11. Update from Commissioner Reynolds on information shared by prisoners – issues on prisoner health care.**

11.1 This item was dealt with under the Commissioner report, paragraph 4.2. Papers were made available.

**12. Any other Business**

12.1 Commissioners agreed that the following would be on the agenda for the May Commission meeting:

* Outreach programme
* Communication Strategy
* Staff engagement

12.2 Commissioners agreed that an item would be tabled on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland in either the May or June Commission meeting.

*The meeting closed at 4:20.*

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

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