

**163rd COMMISSION MEETING ON MONDAY 29 SEPTEMBER AT 10:00 IN THE OFFICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

**In attendance:** Les Allamby (Chief Commissioner)

John Corey

Alan McBride

Marion Reynolds

Paul Yam

Grainia Long (left at 3:15)

Christine Collins (left at 3:20)

Milton Kerr

**Present:** Virginia McVea, Director

David Russell, Deputy Director

Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant

Claire Martin, Communications Worker

**Present for part**

**of meeting:** Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Personnel Manager

Angela Stevens, Caseworker

Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker

Daniel Morris, Professional Placement

Kyra Hild, Researcher

Colin Caughey, Policy Worker

**Apologies:** None

**1. Minutes of the 162nd Commission meeting**

1.1 The minutes of the 162nd Commission meeting were agreed following minor amendments.

1.2 The closed minute of the 162nd was agreed including item 2 which was part of an open discussion.

**2. Matters arising**

2.1 Commissioners were updated on the Sinn Féin housing complaint to the Department of Social Development. (Item 2.1 of the previous minutes refer)

2.2 Commissioners were updated on HMRC advice and that discussions were ongoing.

**3. Chief Commissioner report**

3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on the Public Hearings for the Human Rights Inquiry into Emergency Health Care. Nine out of 12 hearings have currently taken place.

3.2 The Chief Commissioner raised possible Commissioners training for January/February and a possible two day residential around business planning and development.

**4. Commissioner report**

4.1 Commissioner Alan McBride reported on an event he attended on behalf of the Commission. The event was BELONG Children’s Court Launch on 8 September in Stormont.

4.2 Commissioners discussed recent political developments in the UK.

**5. Director’s report**

5.1 Commissioners noted the Director’s report.

5.2 Commissioner discussed with the Director the upcoming human rights based approach training sessions with the PSNI and the NI Civil Service Commissioners.

5.3 Commissioner’s discussed with the Director the upcoming ENNHRI event in Brussels on Older Persons that Commissioner John Corey is attending on the Commissions behalf.

5.4 Commissioner’s noted the Finance report and budget update.

5.5 The Director shared the proposal for a move of premises with Commissioners. Commissioners agreed in principle to a move and to continue to explore the relocation to an identified set of premises as a priority.

**Action: Director to liaise with Landlord and agents to finalise costings.**

**6. Quarterly Report against the Business Plan**

6.1 Commissioners noted the Quarterly Report against the Business plan.

6.2 Commissioners were updated on the projects listed it the Quarterly Report. The issue of prison concerns was discussed.

**Action: An update on outstanding prison issues in relation to the schedule of visits is to be brought to the October Commission meeting.**

**7. Human Rights Inquiry – Report on the progress to date and the outline of the next phase**

7.1 Commissioners were updated on the current progress of the Human Rights Inquiry.

7.2 Commissioners were updated on the public hearings as nine out of 12 have taken place. All the key stakeholders involved in emergency departments have been engaged with.

7.3 Commissioners discussed the process for agreeing the final report, on a chapter by chapter basis with a final document given the likely timescale. It was agreed that an outline of the structure of the report would be shared.

**Action: An outline of the structure of the report is to be on the October agenda.**

7.4 Commissioners discussed the costs so far for the Inquiry. It was agreed that a breakdown would be shared.

**Action: A breakdown of costs for the Inquiry is to be shared at the October meeting.**

**8. Draft Paper in relation to Business Plan Pillar two: Action 1 on a human rights based understanding of Transitional Justice in Northern Ireland**

8.1 Commissioners noted the Draft Paper in relation to Business Plan Pillar two: Action 1.

8.2 Commissioners were updated on the background to this work and informed that the paper in relation to Business Plan Pillar two: Action 1 would be presented chapter by chapter.

**Action: Structure for the second chapter to be shared at October Commission meeting.**

8.3 Commissioners considered the draft chapter being presented which examined the framework of the United Nations integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration standards (2006) which are based on the full range of internationally accepted human rights laws as set out within the treaties of the United Nations and Council of Europe. There was considerable discussion around the standards including their applicability to Northern Ireland, the value and likely risks of applying this approach in the Northern Ireland context, the language used within the chapter and whether the chapter should be solely forward looking in addressing outstanding policy issues.

8.4 The use of the framework of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration and chapter 1 was agreed subject to any detailed comments by email.

8.5 Following the discussion, Commissioner Marion Reynolds dissented to the adoption of the first chapter expressing concerns on retrospective application.

8.6 Commissioner Collins dissented to the adoption of the first chapter expressing concerns of applicability of DDR and on its retrospective application.

**9. Policing Hate Crime: the Kosovo and New South Wales experience – A Study note by the Police Service in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

9.1 This paper was not dealt with at the meeting and has been moved to the next meeting.

**Action: Presentation of paper to be on October Commission agenda.**

**10. Update on CEDAW concluding observations and DoJ response**

10.1 Commissioners were given the background to the submission to CEDAW for its examination of the UK in 2013 and the concluding observations from the UK’s Seventh Periodic Review issued in 2013 and recent correspondence with DoJ around the forthcoming consultation on abortion.

10.2 Commissioners were asked to consider seeking a legal opinion on the above.

**Action: Commissioners agreed that an opinion should be sought.**

**11. Bill of Rights**

11.1 Chief Commissioner, Les Allamby, has been asked to speak at the Transitional Justice Institute launch of the report ‘Political Capacity Building: Advancing a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland’ on Monday 6 October. Commissioner John Corey will also be attending.

**12. Information paper: Identifying human Rights Stories: A scoping study by Middlesex University**

12.1 Commissioners noted the information paper.

**13. Any other Business**

13.1 Together Building a Better Community (TBUC): Commissioners discussed the submission to the OFMdFM Committee.

13.2 Commissioners agreed the paper in principle with final sign off following minor amendments.