



**182nd COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY 27 JUNE 2016 AT 10:00 am
IN THE OFFICE OF
THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Christine Collins
John Corey
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds
Paul Yam

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Virginia McVea, Director
David Russell, Deputy Director
Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Administration Manager
Sara Donnelly, Legal Assistant (agenda item 13)
Gràinne McKeever, Ulster University (agenda item 13)
Lucy Royal-Dawson, Ulster University (agenda item 13)
John McCord, Ulster University (agenda item 13)

1. 1.1 Declarations of interest

1.1.1 No declarations of interest were made.

1.2 Draft minutes of the 180th Commission meeting (HRC182.1)

1.2.1 The Chief Commissioner issued a ruling that item 5.1 of the draft minutes of the 180th Commission Meeting held on 25 April 2016 which were included in the Commission papers would be the final minute.

Action: Minutes of the 180th Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website

1.2.2 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that recording of dissent in the minutes would be discussed at the August Commission meeting taking into account Standing Orders and Code of Governance.

Action: The process for recording of dissent within minutes is to be included on the August Commission meeting Agenda

1.3 Draft minutes of the 181st Commission meeting (HRC182.1a)

1.3.1 The draft minutes of the 181st Commission meeting held on 31 May 2016 were agreed subject to minor amendments.

Action: Minutes of the 181st Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that the paper referring to the Referendum on EU membership was uploaded to the Commission website (paragraph 3.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

2.2 Commissioners were advised that a date had not yet been confirmed for the joint meeting with the Equality Commission NI (paragraph 3.6 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

2.3 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that he had contacted the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) with a view to arranging a meeting with the Secretary of State (paragraph 4.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

- 2.4 Scoping papers for a potential human rights inquiry had been made available to Commissioners and discussed at a meeting on 17 June 2016 (paragraph 6.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.5 It was confirmed that Commissioners had received the relevant legal documents relating to the termination case (paragraph 8.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.6 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that Commissioners' appraisals had been arranged (paragraph 12.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3. Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC182.2)

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on meetings and events he had attended since the last meeting. These included:
- Meeting with John Wadham, Independent Chair of National Preventative Mechanism
 - Launch of the Hidden Voices Films, which was well attended. Thanks and appreciation were extended to the staff involved for what was an excellent and well organised event
 - Meeting with the NI Assembly Chair and the Vice Chair of the Economy Committee re the business and human rights forum
- 3.2 Commissioners were advised that the submission on International Covenant Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) had been made and evidence had been given to the Treaty Monitoring Body in Geneva.
- 3.3 The Chief Commissioner reported on the Court of Appeal hearing on the termination case and that a written judgment is expected in autumn 2016.

4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner Kerr reported on the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) meeting he had recently attended on behalf of the Commission in South Korea.

5. Director's Report including risk management report (HRC182.3)

- 5.1 The Director reported that the external audit final report by the National Audit Office had been delayed slightly due to the sudden illness of the audit lead.
- 5.2 Following on from the successful film launch, the Director reported that the Commission was looking into producing something on learning disabilities as well as creating an app on human rights.
- 5.3 The Director reported that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) were currently drafting job descriptions for the secretariat for the joint work between the two Commissions.
- 5.4 The Director updated Commissioners on the project with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust due to commence in autumn 2016.
- 5.5 The Director took the Commissioners through the current risk register which detailed the inherent, residual and target ratings for each of the risks.
- 5.6 It was agreed that the Director would look at the detail and ratings of the 'failure to meet reasonable expectations of external groups' risk and revise if required.

Action: Risk register to be revised if required (Director)

6. Finance report (HRC182.4)

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Manager presented the new format of the financial report which detailed opening and closing accruals and prepayments, monthly expenditure against budget, year to date expenditure against budget, projected expenditure until March 2017 and the variance against budget.
- 6.2 The Commissioners welcomed the new format and discussed the details.

7. Quarterly report on the Business Plan 2016-17 (HRC182.5)

- 7.1 Commissioners discussed the first quarterly report on the business plan 2016-17.
- 7.2 It was agreed to amend the coding for pillar three (d) 'scope a subject of significant public concern in the area of economic and social rights for a Human Rights Inquiry' and pillar four (e) 'develop and roll out a new community engagement scheme and programme to incorporate public participation on UPR' from amber to green; and pillar two (d) 'develop a series of guidance documents with the Commonwealth Secretariat Human Rights Unit addressing reconciliation and human rights in post conflict societies' to be amended from green to grey as it was now completed.

Action: Coding to be amended on quarterly report

8. 8.1 Statutory Functions report (HRC182.6)

- 8.1.1 The Director updated the Commission on litigation files, watching briefs and open legal enquiries.
- 8.1.2 The Deputy Director updated Commissioners on advice to government since the last Commission meeting.
- 8.1.3 The Deputy Director confirmed that a response had not yet been received from the Minister for Health on the issue of access to fertility treatment.
- 8.1.4 Commissioners were informed and viewed the matter with concern that there was no representation from the Northern Ireland Executive at the recent UK examination on the sixth periodic report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- 8.1.5 It was agreed that the Chief Commissioner would write to the First and Deputy First Ministers individually on this matter, and that the correspondence would be copied to:
- Chair of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 - Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
 - Secretary of State for Justice
 - Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

- Chair of Committee of Executive Office
- Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service
- Attorney General for Northern Ireland

Action: Chief Commissioner to write to the First and Deputy First Ministers and others on Northern Ireland representation at ICESCR examination

8.2 Communications report (HRC182.7)

8.2.1 Commissioners considered the communications report and welcomed the development of an app with students from the University of Ulster.

9. 9.1 Programme for government (HRC182.8)

9.1.1 Commissioners discussed the paper on human rights priorities for the Northern Ireland programme for government 2016.

9.1.2 The Commissioners noted that the draft programme for government framework 2016-2021 contained 14 strategic outcomes, and as far as possible the Commission had indicated where human rights priorities and actions should be placed within the Programme for Government's proposed strategic outcomes.

9.1.3 A number of amendments were agreed and that the paper would be reissued to Commissioners for final approval before responding to the NI Executive.

Action: Amendments to be made to paper for circulation to Commissioners prior to responding to the NI Executive

9.2 Commonwealth update

9.2.1 The Director updated Commissioners on the Universal Periodic Review tool and videos that were being uploaded to the Commonwealth Forum website.

9.2.2 The Deputy Director provided details of an upcoming meeting on mega sporting events scheduled to take place in London later that week with the Commonwealth Games Federation, UNICEF, Commonwealth Secretariat, Institute for Human Rights and Business, NI Commonwealth Games Council and potentially the Foreign Commonwealth Office.

- 9.2.3 The Chief Commissioner updated Commissioners on a proposed seminar on mega-sporting events on 13 December 2016 with keynote speaker Caroline Rees, Director of Governance and Accountability Programme, Harvard University.

9.3 Corporate Planner (HRC182.9)

- 9.3.1 Commissioners noted the corporate planner for 2016/17.

9.4 Ombudsman's conference report

- 9.4.1 The Director provided an update on the conference jointly hosted with the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO) which commanded an international audience along with local stakeholders. The event was commended by participants as a success.

10. Community Engagement

- 10.1 The Director confirmed that she had written to Derry City and Strabane District Council proposing dates in September 2016 for a community engagement.

- 10.2 It was agreed that three other council areas would be considered and contacted for dates within 2016/17.

Action: Director to write to three other councils proposing dates for community engagement

11. Investigatory Powers Bill: follow-up work (HRC182.10)

- 11.1 A briefing for Northern Ireland MPs and Lords had been produced on the Investigatory Powers Bill. The Bill was due to receive its second reading in the House of Lords on 27 June 2016.
- 11.2 Commissioners discussed what other work should be done as the Bill moves to the Committee stage, report stage and third reading.
- 11.3 It was agreed that the Commission would continue to liaise with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and any significant changes/developments would be brought to the attention of the Commissioners.

Action: Continued liaison with EHRC and update Commissioners as necessary

12. Update on Belfast Trust Project

- 12.1 The Director updated Commissioners on the project with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust which is progressing well.
- 12.2 Due to unforeseen circumstances Louise Neeson who is leading on the project was unable to attend and will be invited to present to Commissioners at a future Commission meeting.

Action: Louise Neeson to be invited to present at a future Commission meeting

2.25pm Sara Donnelly, NIHRC and Gràinne McKeever, Lucy Royal-Dawson and John McCord, UU joined the meeting

13. Presentation of research into litigants in person Ulster University and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (HRC182.11)

- 13.1 The Chief Commissioner welcomed the members of the Litigants in Person project to the meeting.
- 13.2 Gràinne McKeever updated Commissioners on the project and provided details on how the research would be conducted including the court observational work which is to commence from September 2016.
- 13.3 It was confirmed that an advisory group had been set up for the project which will be chaired by Mr Justice Stephens.
- 13.4 A mid-season report on the project will be made available in December 2016.
- 13.5 The Commissioners asked a number of questions and offered some observations.
- 13.6 The Chief Commissioner thanked UU and Sara Donnelly for a very informative presentation by the project team.

2.55pm Sara Donnelly, Gràinne McKeever, Lucy Royal-Dawson and John McCord left the meeting

14. Any other business

- 14.1 Commissioners had agreed to conduct a human rights investigation into housing and accommodation for travellers. Following the meeting of 17 June 2016, an in-principle decision had also been agreed to undertake a future human rights inquiry into either mental health, self-harm and suicide or housing need and homelessness focussing on young people.
- 14.2 A brief discussion took place on the proposed investigation into accommodation issues and the travelling community. The Director confirmed that terms of reference were being drafted and should be completed within the next week.
- 14.3 The Deputy Director informed the meeting that staff were also currently working on a scoping paper and drafting letters to the departments.
- 14.4 Papers on the proposed investigation will be brought to the next Commission meeting in August for discussion and approval.

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.