



**184<sup>th</sup> COMMISSION MEETING  
MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 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:** Virginia McVea, Director

**In Attendance:** David Russell, Deputy Director  
Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Administration Manager  
Kellie Turtle, Education Worker (agenda item 7)  
Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker (agenda items 10 & 12)  
Claire Martin, Communications Worker (agenda item 11)  
Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant (agenda item 11)  
Sara Donnelly, Legal & Research Assistant (agenda item 12)

**1.0 Declarations of interest**

There were no conflicts of interest.

## **2.0 Draft minutes of the 183<sup>rd</sup> Commission meeting (HRC184.1)**

2.1 The draft minutes of the 183<sup>rd</sup> Commission meeting held on 22 August 2016 were agreed subject to amendments.

**Action: Minutes of the 183<sup>rd</sup> Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website**

## **3.0 Matters arising**

3.1 Commissioners were advised that the joint meeting with the Equality Commission had been confirmed for 2.30pm on Wednesday 12 October 2016 at Temple Court (paragraph 3.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.2 It was noted that a meeting with the Secretary of State had not yet been confirmed (paragraph 3.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Meeting with Secretary of State to be followed up**

3.3 Dates had been shared for week commencing 21 November 2016 with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) for a joint meeting.

**Action: Doodle poll to be circulated to Commissioners for meeting with IHREC when date confirmed.**

3.4 The Chief Commissioner reported that he had responded to the letter from the Northern Ireland Executive Office regarding the recent lack of engagement at the UK examination on the sixth periodic report of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (paragraph 3.6 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers). He confirmed that he had received a response from the Secretary of State and that the NI Executive Assembly Committee had invited the Commission to give evidence on human rights issues in November 2016.

3.5 The community engagement in the Derry City and Strabane Council area was arranged for Thursday 29 September 2016. The itinerary for the day is to be emailed to Commissioners (paragraph 3.9 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.6 The presentation update on the Belfast Trust Pilot Project on a human rights based approach to Accident and Emergency will be at the October Commission meeting (paragraph 3.10 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Louise Neeson to be invited to present at the October Commission meeting**

3.7 It was noted that the paperless approach for Commission meetings was being trialled for the first time. The Chief Commissioner and Commissioners Corey and Long had received their Microsoft Surfaces on Friday. It is the intention that the paperless approach will be rolled out to the full Commission in October. Dates are to be arranged for the remaining Commissioners to have their Microsoft Surfaces set up (paragraph 7.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Finance and Administration Manager to arrange set up of Microsoft Surfaces for Commissioners**

3.8 Commissioner Reynolds reported that a response to the issue raised with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee on the interpretation of article 10.2 of the Code of Governance is still awaited (paragraph 6.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.9 The Deputy Director updated the meeting on progress to date with the investigation into Traveller Accommodation (paragraph 9.0 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.10 It was noted that a concept note for a future human rights inquiry would be discussed at a separate meeting in November. A doodle poll would be circulated to Commissioners with possible dates (paragraph 10.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Doodle poll to be circulated to Commissioners for separate meeting in November**

3.11 It was noted that the Project Initiation Document for the proposed programme of work on mental health provision and suicide is still to be drafted (paragraph 11.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Project Initiation Document to be drafted**

3.12 The information regarding access to publicly funded fertility treatment in Northern Ireland was still being sought from the Health and Social Care Trusts. The Chief Commissioner agreed to keep Commissioners apprised of the situation (paragraph 13.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Commissioners to be kept informed of developments on Publicly Funded Fertility Treatment in Northern Ireland**

3.13 The Chief Commissioner reported that the Commission had received two consultations, one from the Joint Committee on Human Rights at Westminster and the other from the House of Lords – European Union Committee with regard to the European Union referendum. It was agreed that the documents should be circulated to Commissioners and it was also agreed that the Commission should respond to both consultations (paragraph 14.0 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Consultation documents to be circulated to Commissioners**

3.14 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that he had reported, in error, to the last Commission meeting that the Commission for Victims and Survivors had requested a meeting with the full Commission. The request was for a meeting of Chairs only and the meeting was scheduled to take place in November. (paragraph 15.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

#### **4.0 Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC184.2)**

4.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on meetings and events he had attended since the last meeting. These included:

- Meeting with Claire Sugden MLA
- Meeting with David Ford MLA
- Meeting with Mike Nesbitt MLA
- Meeting with Anne Connolly and Amanda Stewart Chair and CEO of the NI Policing Board
- Meeting with Alistair Ross MLA

- Attendance at British/Irish Association Conference in Oxford
- Meeting with CEDAW delegation
- Speech to the SDLP Conference on Human Rights Implications of leaving the European Union
- Meeting with Stephen Brimstone

4.2 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that he had written to Claire Sugden MLA following their meeting and it was agreed that a copy of the letter would be circulated to Commissioners.

**Action: Copy letter to Claire Sugden MLA to be circulated to Commissioners**

4.3 Commissioner Collins requested a copy of the speech given to the SDLP conference

**Action: Speech to SDLP conference to be circulated to Commissioners**

4.4 Commissioners were advised that the next meeting of the Human Rights and Business Forum was due to take place on 6 October 2016 at the Department of Finance, Clare House, Belfast. Commissioners should encourage anyone from business to come along to the forum meetings and that Commissioners were also welcome to attend.

## **5.0 Commissioners' Reports**

5.1 The Chief Commissioner and Commissioner Yam reported on the NICEM: Hate Crime/Hate Speech Conference they both attended on 21 September 2016. It was agreed that hate crime should be an agenda item for the forthcoming joint meeting with the Equality Commission.

**Action: Hate crime to be an agenda item for the joint meeting with the Equality Commission**

5.2 Commissioner Long reported on a conference she attended on Implementing the UNCRC Concluding Observations which was jointly hosted by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Children's Rights Alliance in Ireland and was a positive example of government engagement with treaty review recommendations.

## **6.0 Review of the Code of Governance and Standing Orders (HRC184.3)**

- 6.1 The need to review the Code of Governance and Standing Orders was discussed.
- 6.2 After discussion, it was agreed that the review would be undertaken by the Audit and Risk Management Committee and that they would draft the Terms of Reference which would be shared with the Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee (JNCC) and then brought back to the full Commission for final approval. Any recommendations emanating from the Audit and Risk Management Committee would come back to the full Commission.

**Action: Audit and Risk Management Committee to undertake review and draft the Terms of Reference to be approved by the Commission and shared with JNCC; Action: Any recommendations to be brought back to the full Commission**

- 6.3 It was also agreed that the review will commence once the current governance work being undertaken by the independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee is completed.

**Action: Review to commence after completion of current work being undertaken by the Independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee**

## **7.0 Director's Report (HRC184.4) including risk management report**

- 7.1 The Deputy Director spoke to the Director's Report which included:
- The Commonwealth Forum Chair programme of work, including the Universal Period Review tool
  - The potential Joint Secretariat for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
  - A three-day training programme in London with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) – Commissioner Collins made a request for copies of the presentations to be circulated

- Discussions with the Commonwealth Games Federation in relation to development of a human rights programme
- The database to facilitate the development of the Annual Statement

**Action: Deputy Director to circulate presentations from the FCO training programme to Commissioners**

*Kellie Turtle, Education Worker joined the meeting at 12.15pm.*

- 7.2 The Chief Commissioner reported that the Education Worker would be leaving the Commission on 7 October 2016 to take up a new post. Commissioners congratulated and wished the Education Worker good luck in the new role. They thanked her for her work with the Commission over the past number of years and in particular commended her work with the Business and Human Rights Forum.

*Kellie Turtle left the meeting at 12.20pm.*

- 7.3 The Risk Management Dashboard and Risk Register Report were noted.
- 7.4 It was confirmed that the issue of vacant staff posts was detailed as an action within the staffing capacity risk.

**8.0 Finance Report (HRC184.5)**

- 8.1 The Finance and Administration Manager presented the finance report for August 2016 and confirmed changes that had been made as part of the August monitoring round.
- 8.2 Commissioners confirmed they were content with the report.

**9.0 Quarterly Report on the Business Plan 2016-17 (as at 14 September 2016) (HRC184.6)**

- 9.1 Commissioners discussed the second quarterly report on the Business Plan 2016-17.
- 9.2 It was noted that the draft paper on human rights law (Pillar Two (b)) was being developed and that an update

may be provided to the October Commission meeting rather than a substantive paper.

- 9.3 The concept paper on a programme of work around human rights and building tolerance (Pillar Two (e)) due to be discussed in October, requires a substantive discussion and as such may be deferred until the November Commission meeting.

**Action: Concept paper on human rights and building tolerance to be agenda item for November Commission meeting**

- 9.4 It was noted that the timeline for the research and production of a paper on the impact of welfare reforms on families with children and young people (Pillar Three (e)) may need reviewed given the change to the social security reform timetable.

**Action: Pillar Three (e) timeline may need to be reviewed and should be reflected in the third quarterly report on the Business Plan**

- 9.5 It was noted that the external funding for the Vice Chair of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Older Persons Working Group had not been received. The Chief Commissioner agreed to follow this up.

**Action: Chief Commissioner to follow up external funding**

- 9.6 It was agreed that the report should be updated to include more detail for areas where the risk to complete is amber and where the project lead has changed this should also be amended.

**Action: Quarterly Report to be updated to reflect changes**

## **10.0 Statutory Functions Report (HRC184.7)**

- 10.1 Commissioners noted the statutory functions report and in particular the highlighted areas of work which detailed the changes since the last Commission meeting.

*Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker joined the meeting at 12.50pm.*



10.2 Commissioners discussed the legal casework report.

10.3 It was agreed that going forward the file start date for litigation files would include the month as well as the year.

**Action: Start date for litigation files to include month going forward**

*Rhyannon Blythe left the meeting at 1.05pm.  
The meeting broke for lunch.*

*Claire Martin, Communications Worker and Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant joined the meeting at 1.45pm.*

### **11.0 Communications Report (HRC184.8)**

11.1 The Communications Worker and Digital Communications Assistant gave a short Power Point presentation to Commissioners on developments with Instagram and social media.

11.2 The Communications Worker and Digital Communications Assistant were commended for their work on the Commission's website and the use of infographics to illustrate each article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has proved very user friendly.

*Claire Martin and Zara Porter left the meeting at 2.00pm.*

*Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker and Sara Donnelly, Legal and Research Assistant joined the meeting at 2.00pm.*

### **12.0 Request for Legal Assistance (HRC184.9)**

12.1 Commissioners discussed the legal assistance paper (HRC184.9.1) including additional external correspondence. It was agreed that the Commission could not provide financial support for the case.

12.2 It was agreed that the Assistant Caseworker would inform the applicant of the Commission's decision.

**Action: Assistant Caseworker to inform applicant of Commission's decision**

*Commissioner Corey and Commissioner Long left the meeting at 2.40pm*

12.3 Commissioners discussed the legal assistance paper (HRC184.9.2). It was agreed that the Commission could not provide financial support for the case.

12.4 It was agreed that the Legal and Research Assistant would inform the applicant of the Commission's decision.

**Action: Legal and Research Assistant to inform applicant of Commission's decision**

*Rhyannon Blythe and Sara Donnelly left the meeting at 2.50pm.*

### **13.0 Procedure for dealing with Commission submissions (HRC184.10)**

13.1 A detailed discussion took place on the procedure for dealing with Commission submissions and the process for signing off final responses. The existing arrangements were confirmed.

### **14.0 Database update**

14.1 The Deputy Director reported that the new database was now live for all staff and that Commissioners would be shown the content of the database at the Commission meeting in October. Going forward the statutory functions report on legislation and policy would cease and Commissioners would receive a generated report from the database on the Annual Statement and the Commission's position for each of the areas.

**Action: New report on legislation and policy to be available to October Commission meeting**

### **15.0 Any other business**

15.1 As the Chief Commissioner will be at the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) meetings in Zagreb and Tbilisi on 31 October 2016 the Commission meeting has been brought forward to 10.00am on Monday 24 October 2016.

15.2 Commissioner Yam confirmed he would be unable to attend and his apologies were noted.

*The meeting closed at 3.45pm.*