



**186<sup>th</sup> COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 28 NOVEMBER 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 *until 11.05am*  
John Corey  
Milton Kerr  
Grainia Long *from 11.45am*  
Alan McBride  
Marion Reynolds *until 4.00pm*  
Paul Yam

**In Attendance:** Virginia McVea, Director  
David Russell, Deputy Director  
Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Administration Manager  
Claire Martin, Communications Worker (agenda items 12 and 20)  
Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker (agenda items 15 and 16)  
Sara Donnelly, Legal Assistant (agenda items 15, 16 and 17)

Commissioner Corey raised an issue on behalf of the Audit and Risk Management Committee for which they were seeking approval. The Commission approved the recommendations and agreed that a special closed meeting of the Commission would take place on Monday 5 December 2016 to discuss the issues raised.

*Post meeting note: The meeting on Monday 5 December 2016 was postponed and will be an item on the Commission Agenda for Friday 16 December 2016.*

## **1.0 Declarations of interest**

1.1 There were no conflicts of interest.

## **2.0 Draft minutes of the 185<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting (HRC186.1)**

2.1 The draft minutes of the 185<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting held on 24 October 2016 were agreed subject to minor amendments.

**Action: Minutes of the 185<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website**

## **3.0 Matters arising**

3.1 The Joint Committee meeting of the NIHRC and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) took place on Monday 21 November 2016. The Joint Secretariat was discussed at that meeting and it was agreed that a small group made up of the IHREC Interim Chief Executive, the Director of NIHRC and a Commissioner from each of the Commissions would meet to discuss the logistical arrangements for the appointment and report back to both Commissions. It was agreed that Commissioner Long would represent the NIHRC (paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.2 It was agreed that an interview with the Irish Times would take place as part of the Joint Committee work and that the Northern Ireland newspapers would be approached to see if a similar initiative could be undertaken.

**Action: Chief Commissioner to liaise with the Communications Worker**

3.3 A meeting to discuss the Human Rights Inquiry is still to be arranged (paragraph 3.4 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Human Rights Inquiry meeting to be arranged**

- 3.4 Commissioners noted that the final version of the Annual Statement 2016 was with the printers for publication (paragraph 6.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

*Commissioner Collins left the meeting*

#### **4.0 Chief Commissioners report (HRC186.2)**

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

- Presentation to European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) General Assembly in Zagreb on counter terrorism issues
- Meeting with Brian Rowntree, Civil Services Commissioner
- Meeting with Criminal Justice Inspectorate Roundtable on future work
- Evidence to Northern Ireland Assembly's Executive Committee on UNCRC, ICESCR and CERD Concluding Observations
- Joint meeting with Commissioners from other bodies

- 4.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on upcoming meetings and events that he will be attending. These included:

- Launch of the Commission's Annual Statement 2016 on 8 December 2016
- Business and Human Rights Forum Meeting followed by a Seminar on Business and Human Rights on 13 December 2016
- Annual Human Rights Lecture on 17 January 2017

#### **5.0 Commissioners' Reports**

- 5.1 Commissioner Corey reported on the workshop and roundtable he attended on 27 October 2016 at Edinburgh Law School on Brexit and the British Bill of Rights (a paper on the workshop was included in the

Information Papers). Commissioner Corey confirmed that he was awaiting the final report from the workshop.

- 5.2 Commissioner McBride encourage attendance for the 'stand-up comedy' event as part of the Human Rights Festival which was due to take place on 9 December 2016 at the Barge, Belfast.
- 5.3 The Chief Commissioner confirmed and welcomed that a number of events that the Commission was involved with were detailed in the Human Rights Festival Programme.

*Commissioner Long joined the meeting*

## **6.0 Director's Report**

- 6.1 The Director updated the Commission on the following:
  - the secretariat for the Joint Committee of the NIHRC and IHREC
  - progress regarding the tenders for the provision of internal audit services
  - staffing
- 6.2 It was agreed that a paper on the Commission's education work and materials would be brought to the February 2017 Commission meeting.

**Action: Paper on education to be drafted for February 2017 Commission meeting**

## **7.0 Finance Report (HRC186.3)**

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

## **8.0 Review of Email Facilities (HRC186.4)**

- 8.1 Commissioner discussed the current email facilities and whether or not there was a need to introduce a new arrangement whereby all Commissioners had their own NIHRC email address.
- 8.2 Commissioners accepted that the use of personal emails was not without risk and that there was not an urgent business risk for transferring to a Commission email address.
- 8.3 Commissioners also agreed that email communication would be proportionate with carrying out Commission business effectively.

## **9.0 Feedback on Item 3.8 – Paper for October 2016 Commission Meeting**

- 9.1 It was noted that the paper from Commissioner Reynolds has now been deferred until the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee members have completed their work (paragraph 3.8 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

**Action: Commissioner Reynolds paper deferred until after meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee**

## **10.0 Database Presentation**

- 10.1 The Deputy Director gave a presentation on the NIHRC database.
- 10.2 Commissioners congratulated staff and in particular the interns who had worked on developing the database.
- 10.3 It was agreed that consideration would be given as to whether or not Commissioners would have access to the database as a 'read only' function.

**Action: Director and Deputy Director to consider a 'read only' function for Commissioners**

### **11.0 Database Annual Statement – Equality and Non-Discrimination Section (Commission’s Position) (HRC186.6)**

11.1 As a result of the new database it was noted that Commissioners would receive a different section of the Annual Statement each month for consideration.

11.2 It was noted that the Commission’s position on the Equality and Non-Discrimination Section of the Annual Statement was that which was adopted as at November 2016.

11.3 Commissioners discussed the Equality and Non-Discrimination Section page by page and agreed the Commission’s position, subject to a number of amendments.

**Action: Equality and Non-Discrimination Section to be amended as per discussion**

*Claire Martin, Communications Worker joined the meeting*

### **12.0 Communications Report including Corporate Calendar and December Events (HRC186.7)**

12.1 The Communications Worker gave a short Power Point presentation to Commissioners providing details of social media coverage and forthcoming events being hosted by the Commission.

*Claire Martin left the meeting*

### **13.0 Commonwealth Update (HRC186.8)**

13.1 The Deputy Director provided an update on the work of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions which included the production of a UPR Guide for National Human Rights Institutions.

13.2 It was noted that the online Guide would be brought to Commissioners for approval before completion.

## **14.0 Mega Sporting Events and Human Rights (HRC186.9)**

14.1 The Deputy Director provided some background on the Mega Sporting Events and Human Rights paper which provided details of a potential funding bid being considered by the Commonwealth Games Federation in the context of their strategic objectives for 2016-2022.

14.2 Commissioners discussed the proposal and gave approval to continue discussions with the Commonwealth Games Federation. It was agreed that the Deputy Director would continue to update the Commission on developments.

**Action: The Deputy Director to continue to liaise with the Commonwealth Games Federation and report back on developments**

*Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker and Sara Donnelly, Legal Assistant joined the meeting*

## **15.0 Legal Functions Report (HRC186.10)**

15.1 Commissioners discussed the legal functions report.

15.2 Commissioners noted that the hearing into the death of Patrick Finucane had been heard and was waiting judgment.

15.3 Commissioners noted that the hearing into the death of Seamus McCollum had been adjourned until January 2017.

## **16.0 Application for Assistance (HRC186.11)**

16.1 Commissioners discussed the application for assistance (HRC186.11). It was agreed that the Commission could not provide support for the case.

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

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

## **17.0 Prisoner Communication Report (HRC186.12)**

17.1 Commissioners discussed the Prisoner Communication Report which provided details of the Communications Compact provided to all prisoners at HMP Maghaberry.

17.2 It was agreed that the Legal Assistant would write to the Northern Ireland Prison Service asking for clarification on prisoners' contacts with journalists.

**Action: Legal Assistant to write to the Northern Ireland Prison Service**

*Rhyannon Blythe and Sara Donnelly left the meeting.*

## **18.0 Update on Travellers' Accommodation Investigation (HRC186.13)**

18.1 Commissioners were updated on the Travellers' Accommodation Investigation and agreed that the investigation should be extended to include the Belfast City Council area.

18.2 It was noted that the Traveller Awareness Training would take place on Tuesday 24 January 2017.

*Commissioner Reynolds left the meeting*

## **19.0 Article 3 Project Update (HRC186.14)**

19.1 Commissioners discussed the Article 3 Project Update and how the project could be progressed.

19.2 It was agreed that the Director would draft an augmented paper for discussion at the December Commission meeting.

**Action: Director to draft an augmented paper for discussion at December Commission meeting**

*Claire Martin, Communications Worker joined the meeting*

## **20.0 Prince's Trust (HRC186.15)**

20.1 The Communications Worker updated the Commission on the mental health and self-harm project with the



Prince's Trust and confirmed that engagement with young people would commence in January 2017.

*Claire Martin left the meeting*

## **21.0 Any Other Business**

21.1 Commissioner Corey brought to the attention of the meeting that there had recently been four suicides in prisons and asked if this was something the Commission could discuss further. It was agreed that the matter would be considered at the December Commission meeting.

**Action: Prisoners and Suicide to be discussed at the December Commission meeting.**

*The meeting closed at 4.35 pm*