



**199th COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2018 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
Helen Ferguson
Helena Macormac
Paul Mageean
John McCallister
Eddie Rooney
Graham Shields

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) (*agenda items 1-9*)
Hannah Russell, Policy and Research Officer (*agenda items 6 and 7*)
Rebecca Magee (Personal Assistant) (*agenda items 10-13*)
Rhyannon Blythe, Senior Legal and Research Officer (*agenda item 10*)
Sara Donnelly, Legal and Research Officer (*agenda item 10 and 12*)
Zara Porter, Communications and Public Affairs Officer (*agenda item 11*)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Minutes and Matters arising (HRC199.1)

2.1 The minutes of the Commission meeting held on 29 January 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

Action: Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2018 to be placed on the Commission's website.

2.2 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that the next Community Engagement would be on Wednesday 28 March 2018 in Coleraine and not Fermanagh. Dates are to be arranged for Community Engagements taking place during 2018/19 (paragraph 2.3 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Dates to be arranged for Community Engagements during 2018/19

2.3 The Chief Executive confirmed that he and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) had met with the landlord's agent to put a proposal to them about the regeneration in North Street. It was confirmed that confirmation on the proposal was required by the middle of March 2018 before the Commission could commit to moving. If the Commission had heard nothing further by this date the objective will be removed from the Business Plan for 2018/19 (paragraph 2.6 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Commissioners to be kept informed of progress

2.4 It was noted that there had been no further progress with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) on the business case for the Joint Secretariat. However, the Chief Commissioner confirmed that he and the Chief Executive were meeting with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland later that date and would raise the issue at the meeting (paragraph 2.7 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Commissioners to be updated on meeting with Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, including business case for the Joint Secretariat

2.5 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that correspondence had been received from Sinn Féin and the Northern

Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). It was agreed that the Chief Commissioner would raise the issue of housing inequalities in Northern Ireland with the Chief Executive of the NIHE when they meet to discuss travellers' accommodation (paragraph 2.9 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Housing inequalities in Northern Ireland to be raised at meeting with Chief Executive of the NIHE

2.6 The Chief Executive confirmed that a revised NI Deliberative Forum Report had been received from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and would be shared with Commissioners (paragraph 2.13 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: NI Deliberative Forum Report to be shared with Commissioners

2.7 It was noted that Joint Committee statement on Brexit and the paper commissioned from Colin Murphy, Aoife O'Donoghue and Ben Warwick would be launched on Wednesday 14 March 2018 in Dublin (paragraph 11.1 of the previous minutes refers).

3. Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC199.2)

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

- Joint meeting with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Scottish Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission Northern Ireland and the Irish Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Meeting with the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland
- Meeting with Mandy Kilpatrick, PPS to Lord Chief Justice
- Meeting with Labour MPs Owen Smith, Sharon Hodgson, Cat Smith and Seema Malhotra on the termination of pregnancy case (organised by Amnesty International and the Family Planning Association)
- Meeting of Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Geneva and other side meetings including the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRIs) with Commissioner Paul Mageean

4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner McCallister reported on the joint event with the Equality Commission Northern Ireland on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was held on 30 January 2018.
- 4.2 It was noted that Commissioner McCallister had been invited by Martina Anderson, MEP to take part in an event in Brussels on 10 and 11 April 2018.
- 4.3 Commissioner Rooney reported on the recent Commission meeting held with the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health.
- 4.4 Commissioner Mageean updated Commissioners on the GANHRI and CFNHRI meetings held in Geneva which included meetings with UK and Irish government's permanent missions in Geneva.

5. Finance Report (HRC199.3)

- 5.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the financial report for January 2018 and provided details of committed expenditure and explanations for the variances against budget.
- 5.2 It was noted that the interim external audit of the accounts for the period April – December 2017 had taken place and no issues were raised. The final external audit is scheduled to take place week commencing 14 May 2018 with accounts sign-off and certification in time to meet the pre-recess deadline.
- 5.3 Commissioners noted that arrangements were underway for transferring banking facilities to Danske Bank.

Hannah Russell, Policy and Research Officer joined the meeting

6. Travellers' Investigation Implementation Plan (HRC199.4)

- 6.1 Commissioners discussed the Travellers' Investigation Implementation Plan, which entailed a number of

roundtables with key stakeholders. The plan detailed the commitment to review the five urgent recommendations within six months of publication, and to review the full 45 recommendations within 12 months of publication.

6.2 It was agreed that the dissemination meetings should take place before the roundtables.

6.3 Commissioners approved the Implementation Plan.

7. Future Human Rights Investigation/Inquiry

7.1 Commissioners discussed whether the Commission should carry out a human rights investigation or an inquiry as a Business Plan objective for 2018/19.

7.2 It was agreed that Commissioners would begin discussions by looking at the scoping papers produced by staff to assist in deciding what area of significant public concern the Commission should focus on, and this was reflected in an amendment to the draft Business Plan. It was agreed to have an early discussion of what the process entails.

Action: Commissioners to consider scoping papers

Hannah Russell left the meeting

8. Bill of Rights

8.1 Commissioners discussed the Bill of Rights and the recent half-day discussion session held earlier in the month.

8.2 It was agreed that Bill of Rights would be included as a Business Plan 2018/19 objective and reference would be made to the 10th and 20th anniversaries of the Commission's advice and the Good Friday Agreement respectively. The Commission alongside the Equality Commission has invited Alf Dubs MP to speak at an event on 17 May 2018.

Action: Bill of Rights to be included as a Business Plan 2018/19 objective

9. Business Plan 2018/19 (HRC199.5)

- 9.1 Commissioners discussed the draft Business Plan 2018/19.
- 9.2 Commissioners agreed some changes to the draft Business Plan. It was agreed that the amended draft would be shared again with staff and a final version would be brought to the March 2018 Commission meeting for final review and approval.

Action: Draft Business Plan 2018/19 to be amended, shared with staff and brought to the March 2018 Commission meeting for final review and approval

Lorraine Hamill left the meeting

Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant; Rhyannon Blythe, Senior Legal and Research Officer; and Sara Donnelly, Legal and Research Officer joined the meeting

10. Legal Application Process, Legal Application/Termination Policy Position (HRC199.6)

- 10.1 Commissioners were given a detailed briefing of the Legal Application Process and discussed how the process worked in practice. The process was agreed following minor amendments.

Action: the amended document to be presented to the March Commission meeting.

- 10.2 Commissioners discussed the TS application for intervention (request on whether failure to pay housing benefit under amended social security regulations is contrary to EU Treaty law). As TS was already represented by senior counsel it was agreed that a watching brief of the case would be kept as details human rights submissions had already been made on behalf of TS.

- 10.3 Commissioners discussed the Commission's Termination Policy Position and agreed to consider the position in light of the recent CEDAW investigation report.

Action: The issue to be placed on the March Commission meeting agenda.

Rhyannon Blythe left the meeting

Zara Porter, Communications and Public Affairs Officer joined the meeting

11. Communications Report and Demonstration of the APP (HRC199.7)

- 11.1 Commissioners were briefed on the Communications report and were updated on the events planned for the launch of the investigation into Travellers' Accommodation (6 March 2018 in Belfast, 12 March 2018 in Derry/Londonderry).
- 11.2 Commissioners were provided with a demonstration of the NIHRC APP. The APP is now available for Android and Apple platforms.
- 11.3 Commissioners welcomed the App as a valuable contribution to the Commission's work.

Zara Porter left the meeting

12. The Hyponatraemia Inquiry (HRC199.8)

- 12.1 Commissioners were briefed on the background of The Hyponatraemia Inquiry. Commissioners agreed that letters should be sent to the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Board as suggested in the paper.

Action: Letters to be sent to DoH and HSCB.

Sara Donnelly left the meeting

13. Information Papers

- 13.1 Commissioners noted the information papers.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 nothing to report.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.