



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

26 November 2018

**207th COMMISSION MEETING
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
John McCallister
Paul Mageean
Eddie Rooney
Graham Shields

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations,
and Advice to Government)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate
Affairs)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information and
Education, Public and Political Affairs)
Eilis Haughey, Temporary Redeployment, NI Assembly (Agenda
item 7)
Rhyannon Blythe, Senior Legal and Research Officer (Agenda
item 9)
Sara Donnelly, Legal and Research Officer (Agenda item 9)
Hannah Russell, Senior Policy and Research Officer (Agenda
items 10 and 12)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the 206th Commission meeting held on 29 October 2018, and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 206th Commission meeting held on 29 October 2018 were agreed.

Action: Approved minutes of the 206th Commission meeting to be uploaded to the Commission's website.

2.2 It was confirmed that the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners Macormac, Mageean and Shields would be attending the visit to Hydebank on Thursday 6 December 2018 (item 2.3 of the previous meeting refers).

2.3 The joint Community Engagement with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) will take place on 26 and 27 March 2019. Commissioners are to confirm their availability (item 4.2 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to confirm their availability for the joint Community Engagement.

2.4 It was noted that a paper on Community Engagement would be presented at the January 2019 Commission meeting (item 4.4 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Community Engagement paper will be presented to the January 2019 Commission meeting.

2.5 The Chief Executive reported that the recent recruitment exercises were completed. Liz Griffith had been appointed as the temporary Policy and Research Officer and Jason McKeown had been successful in the internal trawl for the temporary EO1 Communications and Public Affairs Officer post (items 5.2 and 5.3 of the previous meeting refers).

2.6 It was noted that the Chief Executive and Director (Finance,

Personnel and Corporate Affairs) would be meeting with the NIO to discuss the budget build for 2019/20 and the proposed further £25,000 cut to the budget. Commissioners agreed that the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive should firmly request the NIO to make no further cuts to the Commission's budget.

2.7 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) advised that Grant Thornton no longer would be meeting the National Audit Office (NAO) contract for external audit. EY have now been appointed as the external auditors and a meeting is to be organised with the NAO, EY and ourselves to discuss the 2018/19 external audit (item 5.5 of the previous meeting refers).

2.8 Commissioners were asked to confirm as soon as possible that they had checked their computers and that any personal information that fell under GDPR had been deleted (item 5.6 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to confirm as soon as possible that they had deleted any personal information, which fell under GDPR.

2.9 It was agreed that the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) would contact IT to ensure that Commission papers would only be retained on Commission surfaces for a period of 3 months.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to contact IT regarding retention period for Commission papers.

2.10 The Chief Executive confirmed that the Stewardship Statement had been submitted to the NIO (item 5.7 of the previous meeting refers).

2.11 It was noted that the Annual Statement had been amended to include reference to Brexit and the Dedicated Mechanism. The final version was with the printers and the publication is due to be received week commencing 3 December 2018 (item 7.2 of the previous meeting refers).

2.12 It was noted that the Commission would be meeting the Women and Equalities Committee on Termination of Pregnancy on Friday 30 November 2018 (item 11.1 of the previous meeting refers).

3. Chief Commissioner's Report

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

- Meeting with David Lavery and team, Department of Justice re Litigants in Person research follow up.
- Attendance at JR76 hearing.
- Meeting with Professor Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights who was undertaking an inquiry into poverty and social security across the UK
- Meetings at Westminster, including meetings with Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Tony Lloyd MP, Corey Stoughton (Acting Director of Liberty), Diana Johnson MP, Lord Dubs, Dominic Grieve MP, Jess Phillips MP, Maria Millar MP, Lord Paul Murphy, Baroness Shami Chakrabarti.
- Attendance at Building a Resilient Belfast event hosted by the Commissioner for Resilience at Belfast City Council
- Meeting with the Human Rights Consortium and the Equality Commission NI

4. Commissioners' Reports

4.1 Commissioner Mageean provided an update on the Roundtable on Social Care and Prisons, held on Friday 23 November 2018, which has been well attended and very useful.

4.2 Commissioner McCallister confirmed that the report on the visit to Colombia that he took part in over the summer would be launched in Parliament on Wednesday 28 November 2018.

5. Finance Report

5.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the Financial Report for October 2018.

5.2 It was noted that the increase in IT costs related to additional work on the legal database to ensure compliance with GDPR.

- 5.3 The Director reported on a Subject Access Request received in October and confirmed that it was responded to within the timescale.

6. Code of Governance

- 6.1 Commissioners reviewed the revisions made to the Code of Governance and agreed some further minor amendments. It was agreed that Appendix 5 of the Code of Governance would be reviewed again in April 2019 when the Strategic Plan was published.

Action: Appendix 5 of the Code of Governance to be reviewed in April 2019 when the Strategic Plan has been published.

- 6.2 An updated version of the Code of Governance is to be circulated to Commissioners.

Action: Updated version of Code of Governance to be circulated to Commissioners.

7. Brexit Update (Oral Item)

- 7.1 Eilis Haughey presented a briefing note on Northern Ireland and the human rights implications of Brexit outlining the key parts of the Draft Withdrawal Agreement and political declaration.

- 7.2 Commissioners discussed the briefing note and it was agreed to consider whether a summary briefing would be useful to stakeholders. This is to be discussed further.

Action: Consideration to be given to publishing a summary briefing for stakeholders.

- 7.3 The Commissioners discussed the recently published Joint Committee document on the Common Travel Area in light of the forthcoming roundtable stakeholder engagement with the NIO.

8. Strategic Plan update

- 8.1 It was noted that, following the stakeholder engagement and

meetings of Commissioners and staff, a first draft of the Strategic Plan had been prepared. The Chief Commissioner, Commissioner Ferguson and the Chief Executive are to meet to further develop - it will then be circulated to Commissioners and staff for comment. It was agreed that it would be discussed at the next Commission meeting on 17 December 2018, with a view to issuing to stakeholders for consultation in January 2019.

Action: Draft of Strategic Plan to be circulated to Commissioners and staff.

Action: Finalised Strategic Plan to be issued to stakeholders for consultation in January 2019.

9. Legal Application for Assistance

9.1 Commissioners were briefed on the Application for Assistance on a judicial review in respect of termination of pregnancy.

9.2 Commissioners considered the Application for Assistance in line with the Commission's legal processes policy and agreed to provide a written submission to the Court. The Commissioners made clear their desire to ensure staff had access to the papers already lodged in the Court.

10. Scoping Papers on:- Homelessness and Housing Need; Looked after Children; and Working Age Poverty

10.1 Commissioners were briefed on three scoping papers. Each, when read with the annexes offered Commissioners the opportunity to consider the options of breadth or depth of an investigation or an inquiry.

10.2 After discussion, it was agreed that it may be more appropriate to consider discrete pieces of work within one or more of these areas rather than a full inquiry. A number of possibilities were canvassed and staff were asked to look at the options.

Action: Staff to look at options for consideration by Commissioners.

10.3 It was agreed that further discussion was required and consideration would have to be given to the options in time for inclusion in the 2019/20 Business Plan.

Action: Further discussion required, linked to the 2019/20 Business Plan.

11. Communications Report, including Human Rights Festival

11.1 The Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs) presented the Digital Communications Report for November 2018.

11.2 Commissioners were updated on press coverage including the Common Travel Area and the JR76 case.

11.3 Visits were continuing to be organised for schools with the lesson plans and teaching notes due to be completed by January 2019.

11.4 A meeting had been held with the Irish Football Association, who were keen to liaise with the Commonwealth Games Council with regard to establishing a Forum on Sports and Human Rights.

11.5 It was noted that during the Human Rights Festival the Commission was launching the Annual Statement on 10 December 2018 and a Business and Human Rights Forum event on 'Are Rights in Fashion?' on 13 December 2018.

12. Any other Business

12.1 The agenda items for the joint meeting with the Equality Commission NI were noted and it was confirmed that all of the Commissioners, with the exception of Commissioners Macormac and McCallister, were available to attend.

12.2 Commissioners were asked to confirm their attendance for the Annual Statement Launch on Monday 10 December 2018 and the

Business and Human Rights Forum event on Thursday 13 December 2018.

Action: Commissioners to confirm their attendance for Annual Statement Launch and Business and Human Rights Forum event.

12.3 Commissioners approved the inclusion of the Commission's logo on the Procurement Guidance Note: Human Rights in Public Procurement. It was noted that the Commission would formally launch the publication in January 2019.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.