

**27 February 2023**

## **254<sup>th</sup> COMMISSION MEETING**

### **Held in the Commission's Offices, Alfred House, 19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED and via Teams**

**Present:** Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner  
Helen Henderson  
Justin Kouame  
David Lavery  
Eddie Rooney  
Stephen White

**In attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)  
Colin Caughey, Director (Advice to Government,  
Research, and Investigations)  
Elsie Trainor, Boardroom Apprentice  
Htaik Win, Solicitor (Agenda Items 8+9)  
Hannah Russell, Senior Policy & Research Officer  
(Agenda item 10)

## **1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Commissioners Kearney and Lavery, Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs), Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and Communications) and Éilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU Withdrawal).
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interests.

## **2. Minutes of the 253<sup>rd</sup> Commission meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the 252<sup>nd</sup> Commission meeting held on 30 January 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

**Action: Minutes of the 253<sup>rd</sup> Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website.**

### 3. Chief Commissioner's Report

3.1 The Chief Commissioner's Report was noted.

### 4. Commissioners' Report

4.1 There was nothing further to report since Commissioners met in January 2022.

### 5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1 The Chief Executive reported that a new date was being sought for the Joint Committee with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

**Action: New date to be shared once confirmed.**

### 6. Finance Report

6.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on the financial position as at 31 January 2022.

### 7. Business Plan

7.1 The Chief Executive reported on the first draft of the Business Plan for 2023-24, which included discussion around adding key performance indicators to the plan. A further draft of the plan will be shared at the March Commission meeting.

### 8. Legal Functions Report

8.1 The Director (Legal Services) provided an update on:

- SPUC: awaiting Judgement on the case.

- Housing Office Challenge: Paper work has been received and the hearing will be in March 2023.

## **9. Application for Assistance**

- 9.1 The Solicitor briefed Commissioners on an application for further assistance to NM (Ministry of Defence in respect of the denial of access to her late partner's pension, as they were not married at the time of his death). The Court of Appeal heard our appeal on 30 January/1 February, following a successful application by the MOD to strike out as an abuse of process.
- 9.2 Commissioners considered the issue of liability for costs, which after three hearings (Master, High Court and Court of Appeal) are likely to be significant. Commissioners agreed that as the substantive human rights issue was still to be heard they would agreed to the continuation of proceedings, by way of judicial review as no further counsel's fees are to be paid as this will fall within existing brief fee.

## **10. Annual Statement Proposal**

- 10.1 The Senior Policy and Research Officer presented a paper on the background to the Annual Statement and a proposal on how the report should be produced for 2023.
- 10.2 Following discussion Commissioners agreed to produce a streamline version of the Annual Statement for 2023.

## **11. Engagement and Communications Report**

- 11.1 There was nothing to report on this item.

## **12. Dedicated Mechanism Report**

12.1 There was nothing to report on this item.

### **13. Advice to Government, Research, and Investigations Update**

13.1 The Director (Advice to Government, Research, and Investigations) gave an oral update on the Investigation report: Relationship and Sex Education in post primary schools in Northern Ireland: A Compelling case for reform, with a draft due at the March meeting.

**Action: Draft of Investigation report to be on March agenda.**

### **14. Any other Business**

14.1 The Commission expressed their condemnation of the brutal attack on Det Ch Insp John Caldwell in Omagh on 24<sup>th</sup> February.

The meeting closed at 12:05pm