



**27<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

## **261st COMMISSION MEETING**

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

**Present:** Alyson Kilpatrick  
Helen Henderson  
Jonathan Kearney  
Stephen White  
Justin Kouame  
David Lavery

**In attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Rebecca Magee, Executive Assistant to the Chief  
Commissioner and Chief Executive  
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)  
Colin Caughey, Director (Advice to Government,  
Research and Investigations)  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel &  
Corporate Affairs)  
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and  
Communications)  
Éilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU  
Withdrawal)  
Vivienne Fitzroy, Boardroom Apprentice

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

- 1.1 There were no apologies received and no declarations of interest.

## 2. Draft Minutes of the 260<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting

2.1 The Draft Minutes of the 260th Commission meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were approved.

**Action: Minutes of the 260<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website.**

## 3. Chief Commissioner report

3.1 The Chief Commissioner's report was noted.

## 4. Commissioners' reports

4.1 Commissioner White reported on the Audit and Risk Management Committee that he and Commissioner Lavery attended on 23<sup>rd</sup> November which included the financial updates, KPI's, funding, freedom of information requests, complaints, risk register, mid-year stewardship report and the audit plan.

**Action: Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to be invited to attend the December Commission meeting.**

4.2 Commissioner White reported that he has been reappointed for a further two years as the Chairman of the RUC George Cross Foundation.

4.3 Commissioner Lavery reported on the Law Society conference that was due to take place in September. The conference was cancelled, and details will be shared once the conference is rescheduled.

## 5. Chief Executive report

5.1 The Chief Executive provided an update, and shared the outcome of the Sub Accreditation Committee review and Commissioners welcomed the news that the Commission has

been re-accredited as an 'A' Status National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).

5.2 The Chief Executive reported that work had begun on drafting the 2024-2025 Business Plan in line with the budget uplift.

5.3 The Chief Executive reported on recruitment that had taken place since the last meeting. This included:

- Administration Officer
- Project Manager for the Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs
- Senior Engagement and Communications Officer

## 6. Finance Report

6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs) presented the finance reports for core and dedicated mechanism expenditure for October 2023.

## 7. Legal update

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

- Legacy – trial is ongoing. An update will be provided following the completion of the hearing
- Own motion challenge to the Illegal Migration Act 2023 – gathering of evidence continues

## 8. Discussion on Memorandum of Understanding

8.1 The Chief Executive provided the background to the Commission entering into Memorandum of Understandings (MoU's) with other organisations.

8.2 Commissioners discussed the Commission entering into MoU's and the purpose of those MoU's. Commissioners agreed that further discussion was needed and the Chief Executive agreed to draft a paper in due course.

**Action: Chief Executive to draft a paper on the Commission entering into MoU's and their purpose in due course.**

## 9. Team updates

9.1 The Director (Advice to Government, Research and Investigations) provided an update on the policy function. This included:

- Submission made to the Department of Education on Relationship and sexuality education (RSE). Commissioner Kearney recorded his dissent regarding the submission.
- NIHRC has been named as a partner with the University of Leeds on a project on the NHRI system within the UK and Ireland. The NIHRC will host a doctoral person in the new year.

9.2 The Director (Human Rights after EU Withdrawal) provided an update on the Dedicated Mechanism function. This included:

- Launch of the Asylum Research which took place on 20<sup>th</sup> November. The event was well attended and research was positively received.
- The next meeting of the three Commissions will take place in Dublin on 6<sup>th</sup> December.

**Action: Commissioners to contact Executive Assistant for travel bookings.**

9.3 The Director (Engagement and Communications) provided and update on the Engagement and Communications function. This included:

- Press around the Own motion challenge to the Illegal Migration Act 2023
- Producing a fact-sheet on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023
- Podcast recordings are on going with Northern Irish actor James Martin due this week to discuss his work with Mencap
- The upcoming launch of the Annual Statement 2023, on 11<sup>th</sup> December in Parliament Buildings, Stormont

## **10. Any other business**

10.1 Nothing to report.

The meeting closed at 11:20am