



25 November 2024

271st COMMISSION MEETING

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

Present: Alyson Kilpatrick
Helen Henderson
Mairead Holder
Justin Kouame
David Lavery
Stephen White

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director (Advice to Government,
Research, and Investigations) (except agenda item 5)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel &
Corporate Affairs)
Éilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU
Withdrawal) (except agenda item 5)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and
Communications) (except agenda item 5)
Darren Veighey (Administrative Officer) (except agenda
item 5)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Commissioner Kearney.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Draft minutes of the 270th Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the 270th Commission meeting were agreed subject to a minor amendment.

Action: Minutes of the 270th Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website.

3. Chief Commissioner's report

3.1 Commissioners noted the Chief Commissioner's report.

3.2 The Chief Commissioner documented meetings/events /conferences attended since the previous Commission meeting in September.

3.3 The Chief Commissioner reported on the Joint Committee meeting with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The Joint Committee discussed the inquest into Denis Donaldson's murder in 2006. The NIHRC had previously engaged with the family on the matter, however issues still required resolution. It was not clear why the inquest had been adjourned. It was agreed that the Director (Advice to Government, Research & Investigations) will draft a letter to the Coroner.

Action: Director (Advice to Government, Research & Investigations) to draft a letter to the Coroner.

4. Commissioners' reports

4.1 Commissioner White informed the Commission that he had been asked by the UK government to carry out an assignment in Peru. Commissioner White stated that his remit would involve contributing to workshops for police officers. Topics for inclusion in workshops included police reform and community policing. Commissioner White will also be spending a day with the Peru Minister of the Interior. He assured the Commission that he has no conflict of interest.

4.2 Commissioner Henderson reported that she had attended the independent mechanism forum meeting.

Commissioner Henderson stated that the meeting was very productive with discussions surrounding the introduction of a Code of Conduct for the forum.

The forum includes members from disability organisations who can inform on their work and help draft a disability strategy.

5. Closed Session – Confidential Matter

5.1 The meeting moved to a closed minute.

6. October Finance Report/November Oral Update

6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs) presented the finance report for core and dedicated mechanism activities for the period to November 2024 and the committed expenditure to March 2025.

6.2 The Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs) reported that recruitment had commenced for Policy and Research Officers and a Digital Communications Assistant. It was however noted that the posts may not be filled until the final quarter of the financial year which may result in an underspend in staffing.

6.3 From 1 October 2024 the temporary posts of Administrative Officer and Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer were brought in-house, resulting in a projected saving.

7. KPI FULL REPORT HRC271.04

7.1 The Chief Executive presented the KPI Report for the second quarter ending 30 September 2024.

7.2 The move from the old business plan model to KPI monitoring was based on advice and an internal audit recommendation. The Chief Executive stated that this was a work in progress and was premised on the Australian Human Rights Commission.

7.3 The Director (Advice to Government, Research and Investigations) stated that during quarter two the Commission received proposals for private member bills from 14 MLA's.

7.4 The Chief Executive cited the Illegal Migration Act and that the court of Appeal is still considering the Dillon case with respect

to the legacy of the troubles in NI.

- 7.5 The Chief Executive also noted his concern in relation to the pensions case for which a decision had not yet been made by the appointed judge. This case involved a woman who was denied her late partner's pension given that she was not married or in a civil partnership.
- 7.6 The Chief Executive also reported that in any given quarter the office is receiving over 100 legal enquiries. He stated that sometimes people come to the Commission when they have tried all other organisations for potential help. Housing and health (particularly mental health) make up most enquiries.

The Chief Commissioner noted with regret that on too many occasions instances of poor mental health are not tackled until it is too late. This societal issue seems to be more prevalent than ever before. The Chief Commissioner wished to discuss this matter further in December.

- 7.7 The Director (Engagement and Communications) reported that the previous Communications report was issued in August 2024. The next one was due in February 2025.

Previous quarter activities included utilising a stall at the Summer Belfast Pride event, assisting with the DM report and Business & Human Rights Index report launches.

- 7.8 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported that the Commission now had a register of trainings undertaken by staff. Commissioners were also encouraged to send through details of relevant trainings that they had participated in. Furthermore, should any Commissioner wish to participate in training courses then they should contact the Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs).
- 7.9 The Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) informed the Commission that an internal audit plan had been drafted for 2024/25 with two internal audits due to take place in February/March 2025 (IT and Financial systems).

8. Any other business

- 8.1 The Chief Executive reported that the Chief Commissioner had been reappointed to the Board of ENNHRI and also appointed to the prestigious role of Secretary to the GANHRI Bureau.

In addition, the Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) was reappointed as Finance Chair of ENNHRI. Both were congratulated by the Commission. He added that these appointments will raise the profile of the NIHRC.

9. Date of next meeting

- 9.1 The next meeting was arranged for Monday 16th December 2024, 10am. It was asked that an apology be made on behalf of Commissioner White.

The main meeting closed at 12:10pm.