



**31 March 2025**

**275th COMMISSION MEETING**

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

**Present:** Alyson Kilpatrick  
Helen Henderson (Online)  
Mairead Holder  
Jonathan Kearney  
Justin Kouame  
David Lavery (Online)  
Stephen White

**In attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Services)  
Éilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU Withdrawal) (Online)  
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and Communications)  
Darren Veighey (Administrative Officer)  
Laura Dawson (Solicitor (Legal and Research Officer)) (Online) – Agenda Item 8

**Apologies:** None

**1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1 There were no apologies.
- 1.2 Commissioner Holder raised a potential conflict of interest in relation to an application of assistance. This was noted.

After discussion, it was concluded the matter of a financial interest was not evident and it was appropriate for Commissioner Holder to take part.

- 1.3 There were no other declarations of interest.

## **2. Draft minutes of the 274<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting and matters arising.**

- 2.1 The minutes of the 274<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting were agreed.

**Action: Minutes of the 274<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website when finalised.**

## **3. Chief Commissioner's Report**

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner's Report was noted for the record.
- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner report detailed events, meetings and conferences attended since the last Commission meeting. The Chief Commissioner was mindful that her role necessitated regular travel, however she also realised the importance of balancing domestic responsibilities. The Chief Commissioner stated that other Commissioners could attend such events/meetings should the need arise.

## **4. Commissioners' Reports**

- 4.1 There was nothing to report.

## **5. Chief Executive Report**

- 5.1 The Chief Executive gave an oral report.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive communicated that he had recently attended the GANHRI General Assembly (10-14 March 2025).

He stressed the importance and potential of the Chief Commissioner's appointment as Secretary of GANHRI. This appointment would elevate the work of the Commission and reflect the significant regard in which NIHRC is held by its peers.

## **6. Finance report from Director of Finance, Personnel and Corporate Services.**

6.1 The Director presented an overview of the finance and budget reports (Core and DM) for the current financial year and highlighted the following:

### ***Core***

- The anticipated overspend at year-end is now estimated to be £6,784.
- Recruitment has been completed for the post of Personal Secretary. Jhoanna Sto Domingo will take on the new role from 1 April 2025.
- The proposed pay award offered by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has now been approved. This will be back dated to 1 August 2024.
- The projected underspend in salary costs is a result of vacant posts throughout the year and two staff members on half pay for part of the year.

### ***Dedicated Mechanism***

- Recruitment for the vacant Policy and Research Officer post was completed in December 2024 with the successful applicant due to take up post in March 2025. A further Policy and Research Officer left the Commission on 30 January 2025 and that post remains vacant.
- The Paralegal post is currently vacant. The recruitment process was completed on 19 March and the successful applicant is due to start with the Commission on 1 May 2025.
- The proposed pay award offered by the NICS has been confirmed and will be back dated to 1 August 2024.

6.2 Three Policy and Research Officers (Staff Officers) were successful in the internal trawl for the temporary Deputy Principal roles.

6.3 The Equality Commission Northern Ireland reviewed the Commission's policies and procedures following the recent Employment Tribunal case and concluded that there were no suggested amendments to make to the NICS Policies and that the Commission had met the terms of the settlement.

- 6.4 The Director reported that Internal Audit had recently commenced.
- 6.5 The current contract with Cyber Security NI was due to end on 31 March 2025. This contract had been established through ECNI. Cyber Security NI would continue providing IT services for the subsequent six months with a full tendering process being actioned for the period commencing 1 October 2025.

## **7. Dedicated Mechanism Bi-annual Report**

- 7.1 The Director (Human Rights after EU withdrawal) presented an overview of work conducted within the previous six months.
- 7.2 The information presented included policy and legislation, research conducted, legal aspects, engagement, Communication and Education, International work, and Corporate and Human Resources.

## **8. Applications for Assistance**

### **LT (Deceased)**

- 8.1 The Solicitor presented 'Application for Assistance - LT Deceased'.
- 8.2 The recommendation from staff was for the Commission to exercise its powers to assist in this case.
- 8.3 Commissioners agreed that an application to intervene should proceed.

**Action: Application to intervene in the LT Deceased Case to be made.**

### **Dillon & others**

- 8.4 The Chief Executive presented to Commissioners the background in relation to 'Application for Assistance (Dillon & Others)'.
- 8.5 The Commission previously intervened in the NI Court of Appeal and NI High Court proceedings, challenging the compatibility of the Legacy Act with the ECHR and WFA2.

- 8.6 Commission staff recommended that the Commissioners should support an application to intervene in this case before the UK Supreme Court, seeking both oral and written submissions.
- 8.7 Commissioner Kearney requested a number of clarifications and these were agreed. The application will be amended to reflect this discussion.
- 8.8 Commissioners agreed that an application to intervene should proceed.

**Action: Application to intervene in case of Dillon & Others to be made.**

## **9. Draft Business Plan 2025-26 (Including Budget)**

- 9.1 The Draft Business Plan was presented to the Commissioners.
- 9.2 The Chief Executive noted that publishing the Draft Business Plan budget in its current form would present the Commission as failing to break even. This would be incompatible with guidance on Managing Public Funds. It would also reflect negatively with stakeholders, including the recent re-accreditation from the GANHRI.
- 9.3 Consequently, the matter was discussed in advance with the NIO which has agreed to engage with HMT prior to the UK Spending Review outcome.
- 9.4 It was agreed by Commissioners to defer approval of the draft Business Plan, upon request from the NIO, until confirmation of the Commission's budget for 2025-26. An update would be provided by the Chief Executive at the next Commission meeting.

**Action: Chief Executive to update Commissioners on the 2025-26 budget at the next Commission meeting**

- 9.5 Commissioner Lavery requested that the Chief Executive circulate a note to Commissioners stating recommendations from both the Independent and Economic Reviews.

**Action: Chief Executive to circulate the recommendations from the Independent and Economic Reviews to Commissioners**

## **10. Draft Strategic Plan 2025-28**

- 10.1 Commissioners approved the Draft Strategic Plan 2025-28 for publication and noted that the Chief Commissioner would include the foreword.

**Action: Strategic Plan for 2025-28 to be published with inclusion of the Chief Commissioner's foreword**

## **11. Any other business**

- 11.1 Commissioner Henderson enquired if Commission staff were privy to calls for human rights administrators to be more involved in matters concerning counter terrorism and extremism. The Chief Executive stated that the Director for Research is reviewing this area. An update would be presented at the next Commission meeting.

**Action: Director for Research to provide an update at the next Commission meeting**

- 11.2 The next meeting was arranged for Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 10am.

- 11.3 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.35am.