



27 October 2025

281st COMMISSION MEETING

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

Present: Alyson Kilpatrick
Helen Henderson
Mairead Holder
Jonathan Kearney (online)
Justin Kouame

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director of Policy (Advice to Government, Research, Investigations, and International Treaties) (Online)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs)
Eilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU withdrawal) (online)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and Communications)
Peter, Work Placement Student
Emily Mills, Policy and Research Officer (Agenda Item 7) (online)
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal) (Agenda Items 8-10) (Online)
Michael Black, Solicitor (Legal and Research Officer) (Agenda Item 10)

Apologies: David Lavery
Stephen White

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Commissioners David Lavery and Stephen White.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Draft minutes of the 280th Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the 280th Commission meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

Action: Minutes of the 280th Commission meeting to be uploaded to the Commission's website.

3. Chief Commissioner's Report

3.1 The Chief Commissioner's Report was noted.

4. Commissioners' Reports

4.1 Commissioner Henderson reported that she would be on mission from 18 November 2025 in her role as a Fellow of the Churchill Fellowship.

5. Report from Chief Executive

5.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that SCC Ltd have been appointed as the Commission's new Internal Auditors.

5.2 The process for recruiting Policy and Research Officers had concluded and recruitment had commenced for a Senior Engagement and Communications Officer and a Finance Officer. It was hoped that the Commission would also be able to go out to recruit for a Personnel Officer early in the new year.

5.3 A first draft of the Business Case for the period 2025-29 was submitted to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) in line with the outcome of the UK Government Spending Review 2025-29. The Chief Executive and Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) met with the NIO the previous week and some minor amends are to be made. The final agreed version will be shared with Commissioners in due course.

Action: Business case to be shared with Commissioners when finalised.

5.4 It was noted that the Chief Commissioner had received correspondence from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland confirming in principle the approval of a change in the Commission's pay policy, in accordance with the

recommendations of two independent reviews. Any change remains subject to the completion of a mapping process, NIPSA consultation exercise and final approval by the Secretary of State.

- 5.5 The Chief Executive reported that the Commission was served papers on 17 October 2025 on behalf of Mr Murray. This case against the Commission and the litigation protocol with the NIO is engaged. The Sponsoring Department will therefore be notified. It was agreed that Senior and Junior Counsel be appointed, meetings were to be arranged, and Commissioners kept updated on progress.

Action: Litigation protocol with the NIO to be engaged and Sponsoring Department notified.

Senior and Junior Counsel to be appointed and meetings arranged.

Commissioners to be kept informed of progress.

6. Finance Report September 2025

- 6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the Finance Report for the period to 30 September 2025 for Core and the Dedicated Mechanism. The paper reflected actual spend for the period April-September 2025 and the budget going forward to the end of the financial year. It was noted that the budget would be subject to amendment following confirmation of the acceptance of the Commission's business case for the additional approved in-year funding.

7. Annual Statement 2025

- 7.1 The Director of Policy (Advice to Government, Research, Investigations, and International Treaties) confirmed that several substantive changes had been made to the Annual Statement 2025 since the previous Commission meeting.
- 7.2 The Policy and Research Officer provided an overview of areas of the Annual Statement which required consideration by Commissioners.
- 7.3 Commissioners approved the publication of the Annual Statement 2025 and agreed to share any minor amends by email.

Action: Any minor amends to the Annual Statement 2025 to be shared by email.

8. Code of Governance

- 8.1 Commissioners reviewed the Code of Governance. A final version, taking account of minor amendments, will be shared with Commissioners in due course.

Action: Final version of the Code of Governance to be shared with Commissioners.

9. Key Performance Indicators

- 9.1 The Directors provided an update on the key priorities for quarter two for their respective areas of responsibility:
- Ensuring the Commission's advice and research influences decision-makers to take actions that progress the protection and enjoyment of human rights;
 - Ensuring law and policy makers at all levels, consider and address the human rights impacts identified through our advice, research, investigations and reports to the United Nations and Council of Europe;
 - Ensuring the Commission's promotional activities increase understanding and awareness of human rights in Northern Ireland;
 - Ensuring the Commission's education activities increase the capability of individuals, communities, and organisations to promote and protect human rights;
 - Ensuring the Commission delivers effective support to individuals and groups who seek assistance for reported human rights violations and abuses;
 - Ensuring the Commission delivers continuous improvements in accordance with its mandate and the Paris Principles (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/134);
 - Ensuring staff and Commissioners gain knowledge and skills that improve effectiveness and efficiency; and
 - Ensuring the Commission has good corporate governance, effective systems, and arrangements in place to provide assurance on risk management and internal control.

10. Legal Key Performance Update

- 10.1 The Solicitor (Legal and Research Officer) provided updates on the following:

- Granted applications by the Commission to courts and tribunals for leave to appear or provide written submissions;
- Litigation cases;
- Instances of support provided to individual clients through enquiries, appointments with solicitors and applications for assistance;
- Research;
- Instances of international organisations and networks engaging with or seeking advice and input from the Commission;
- Strategic litigation forum;
- Law Society Human Rights Committee; and
- Legal Working Group of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions.

11. Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

11.1 There being no other business the meeting closed.

The meeting ended at 11:45 am