



26 January 2026

284th 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
David Lavery
Stephen White

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel, and
Corporate Affairs)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and
Communications)
Jhoanna Sto Domingo (Personal Secretary to the Chief
Commissioner)
Darren Veighey (Administrative Officer)
Colin Caughey, Director of Policy (Advice to
Government, Research, Investigations, and
International Treaties) (Online)
Eilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU
withdrawal) (online)
Michael Clements, Solicitor (Legal and Research Officer)
(Agenda Item 8)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies and no declarations of interest.

2. Draft minutes of the 283rd Commission meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the 283rd Commission meeting were agreed.
Action: Minutes of the 283rd Commission meeting to be uploaded to the Commission's website.

3. Chief Commissioner's Report

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner's Report was noted for the record.
- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on her meeting with the Bar Council (NI) in relation to the 2026 Annual Lecture.

4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner White informed the meeting that he had been appointed Chairperson of the RUC George Cross Foundation for a further five years.
- 4.2 Commissioner White also informed the meeting that the RUC George Cross Foundation would be holding its Annual Lecture on 22 April 2026 in conjunction with Queens University Belfast. Peter Clarke, Chief Inspector of Prisons would be the special guest at this event.
- 4.3 Commissioner White provided an update on the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 15 December 2025.
- The standard reports were presented to the Audit Committee including monthly finance report, absence statistics, high value purchases, corporate risk register and Freedom of Information requests.
 - Chris Telford and Sean Cavanagh from SCC Ltd (newly appointed internal auditors) attended their first meeting.
 - The internal auditors presented their draft internal audit plan for 2025-28 and a draft internal audit charter for review.
 - The external auditors (Ernst & Young) presented the audit planning report for the 2025-26 financial statements.

- With regards to the Corporate Risk Register, the inherent rating for failure to have an appropriate public profile and staffing capacity was changed from critical to high.
- 4.4 The Chief Executive provided an oral update to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on the following:
- drafting of the Commission’s Business Plan for 2026-27;
 - internal review of a Freedom of Information response;
 - the mapping exercise being undertaken by the internal auditors; and
 - an update on the Gary Murray case (Legacy).
- 4.5 Following the meeting, Commissioners met separately to complete the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Effectiveness Tool.

5. Chief Executive’s Report

- 5.1 The Chief Executive reminded Commissioners that the draft Business Plan for 2026-27 would be brought to the February 2026 meeting initial consideration. The Plan is due to be signed off in March.
Action: The Business Plan 2026-27 to be brought to the February Commission for consideration.
- 5.2 It was also reported that the NIO confirmed that the Business Case for the NIHRC budget 2026-2029 is currently awaiting final approval from HM Treasury.
- 5.3 The mapping exercise on the proposed new pay policy by SCC Chartered Accountants has been completed. Individual meetings with staff have been arranged for the end of January, start of February 2026 and discussions are taking place with NIPSA, the Commission’s recognised Trade Union.
- 5.4 A meeting is to be arranged with the Commission’s Audit and Risk Management Committee to discuss the SCC internal audit report on the mapping exercise. The report will be shared for information at the February Commission meeting.
Action: Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting to be arranged to discuss the internal audit report.

Action: The internal audit report and proposed pay policy to be brought to the February Commission meeting.

- 5.5 The Chief Executive also updated Commissioners in relation to the Gary Murray case. A complaint has been received and a response provided.
- 5.6 The Chief Executive updated Commissioners in relation to future meetings:
- Chief Executive and Chief Commissioner to attend the next Human Rights Stakeholders Forum hosted by the Ministry of Justice in London on 2 March 2026.
 - Chief Executive and Chief Commissioner to meet with Chris Elmore MP (Minister of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) on the same date.
 - Meeting of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions is also due to take place in London in March 2026.
- 5.7 It was also highlighted that Prof. Amy Maguire from the School of Law and Justice at the University of Newcastle, Australia, had presented to staff in December 2025 regarding work with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

6. Finance Report December 2025

- 6.1 The Finance Report as at 31 December 2025 (for both Core and Dedicated Mechanism) was noted. This paper reflected actual spend for period April-December 2025 and the budget going forward to the end of the financial year (March 2026).
- 6.2 It was noted that the Commission was projecting a total underspend in Core of £26,941 and a total overspend in the Dedicated Mechanism of £25,218 at year end.
- 6.3 The Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer has arranged meetings with the Directors to discuss any outstanding commitments and the projected budgets for January to March 2026 to ensure that projections going forward are correct.

- 6.4 The Director also informed the Commissioners that Sridevi Sakruthi had commenced employment with the Commission as Finance Officer.

7. KPI Report Quarter 3 to 31 December 2025 including full Corporate Update

- 7.1 Directors reported on their individual areas in relation to KPIs.

- 7.2 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) provided a full overview of progress against the KPIs for the period April – December 2025 which included:

- progress on the SCA recommendations
- updates on collaboration with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
- learning opportunities for staff and Commissioners
- internal audit
- external audit
- governance matters and risk management
- monthly financial and workforce management reports
- prompt payment

8. Application for Assistance

- 8.1 The Solicitor (Legal and Research Officer) briefed Commissioners regarding an Application for Assistance.

- 8.2 The Commission had been approached by the CLC to intervene in a case.

Legal team staff advised that there would be merit in the Commission becoming involved given their expertise and the potential for gaining knowledge of the subject matter.

It was however deemed that the case had every chance of success without the Commission's help given the previous positive outcomes regarding the similar cases.

8.3 After due consideration, the Commissioners decided not to intervene but asked that the legal team continue to monitor these proceedings and consider what further steps the Commission could take in advancing the issue of delayed discharge. The issue will be brought back to the Commission at a later date.

Action: Legal team to continue to monitor proceedings and report back to the Commission at a later date.

9. Discussion on Membership of Committees

9.1 As the mandate of some of the current Commissioners is due to end on 31 August 2026, it was agreed that to ensure a smooth transition until new Commissioners were appointed that:

- Commissioners Holder and Kouame would join the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- The Chief Commissioner would become a member of the Joint Independent Monitoring Committee for the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in NI with the Equality Commission NI.

10. NI Troubles Bill 2024

10.1 This matter was deferred until the February Commission meeting.

Action: NI Troubles Bill 2024 to be discussed at the February Commission meeting.

11. Any other Business and Date of next meeting.

11.1 There being no other business the meeting closed at 12.50 pm.

11.2 The next meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Monday 23 February 2026.

End of meeting 12:50 pm