

**164th COMMISSION MEETING ON FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER AT 10:00 IN THE OFFICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

**In attendance:** Les Allamby (Chief Commissioner)

John Corey

Alan McBride

Marion Reynolds

Paul Yam

Christine Collins (from 11:15am)

Milton Kerr

Grainia Long (by telephone 10am to midday)

**Present:** Virginia McVea, Director

David Russell, Deputy Director

Claire Martin, Communications Worker

**Present for part**

**of meeting:** Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant

Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Personnel Manager

Angela Stevens, Caseworker

Leanne Cochrane, Researcher

Kyra Hild, Researcher

**Apologies:** None

**1. Minutes of the 163rd Commission meeting**

1.1 The minutes of the 163rd Commission meeting were agreed following amendments to items 2.2, 8.5 and 10.3 and the inclusion of 10.4. The agreement is subject to final sign off at point 8.5.

**2. Matters arising**

2.1 Commissioners were given an update in relation to the NI Civil Service Commissioner training that had just been completed and on the upcoming training with the PSNI.

**3. Chief Commissioner Report**

3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on his meeting with Sir Jonathan Stephens, Permanent Secretary of the Northern Ireland Office.

3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on his meeting with Baroness Randerson, Liberal Democrat and government minister on NI Affairs in the Lords.

3.3 The Chief Commissioner reported that Commissioner Marion Reynolds was stepping down from the prison work and from the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Chief Commissioner Allamby expressed his thanks to Commissioner Reynolds for her work in this area. The Chief Commissioner will take up the work on prisons and Commissioner McBride is to remain on the Audit and Risk Management Committee with Commissioner Corey returning following his period of service as Interim Chair of the Commission.

3.4 Commissioners discussed the Annual Statement launch on 10 December in the Long Gallery at Stormont. A possible suggested speaker for the event was Dominic Grieve. The Chief Commissioner will follow this up.

**Action: Chief Commissioner**

**4. Commissioner Report**

4.1 Commissioner Corey reported on the event he attended in Brussels for the European Network of NHRIs. The event was a planning meeting in relation to Human Rights of Older Persons in Care Project Proposal (2015 – 2016). Commissioner Corey reported on the Commission’s investigation report “In Defence of Dignity” The Human Rights of Older people in Nursing Homes.

**5. Statutory functions Report**

5.1 Commissioners noted the Statutory functions Report.

5.2 Commissioners discussed the outstanding Community visits and these will be arranged for early in the New Year. The Cookstown and Magherafelt meetings will be amalgamated in to a single visit. There will then be reflection of further public engagement work for 2015-16 onwards.

**Action: Community visits to be arranged for early 2015.**

5.3 Commissioners noted the legal functions paper which is appended.

5.4 Commissioners were updated on the CEDAW concluding observations and DoJ response.

5.5 A legal opinion from Senior Counsel was discussed on a possible legal challenge to the failure to legislate to provide the option of termination in Northern Ireland in cases of rape and incest and where there is a serious foetal malformation. The discussion included when the legal action should commence.

5.6 It was unanimously agreed that the legal action should commence following appropriate correspondence with the Department of Justice. The need to prepare a statement covering legal action was also discussed and agreed. Commissioner Reynolds recorded her dissent to commencing legal action in advance of the completion of the consultation process.

**6. Information Service**

6.1 Commissioners were updated on the Information service. In particular Commissioners noted that for planning purposes they will receive a breakdown in themes annually and a quarterly statistical report. The material presented was extremely useful.

**7. Additional Director’s Report**

7.1 Commissioners were updated on the Commission’s budget for 2015-16.

7.2 Commissioners agreed that the Chief Commissioner and Director should continue their engagement with the Secretary of State and political parties around budget and any issues including options around moving premises if necessary.

**8. Human Rights Inquiry**

8.1 Commissioners were updated on the Human Rights Inquiry. The final hearing is on 1 December in the Stormont Hotel. New Minister for Health, Mr Wells will give evidence in the final public hearing in the Inquiry.

8.2 The structure for the report was agreed that individual chapters would be brought to Commissioners for comment as available.

**9. Policing Hate Crime: the Kosovo and New South Wales experience**

9.1 Commissioners received a presentation on Policing Hate Crime: the Kosovo and New South Wales experience. The Commissioners acknowledged the value of the work and the report. This work was undertaken in partnership with the PSNI.

9.2 Chief Commissioner agreed to mention the report at the meeting with the Chief Constable in November.

**10. Draft paper in relation to Business Plan Pillar two: Action 1 on a human rights based understanding of Transitional Justice in Northern Ireland**

10.1 Commissioners discussed the paper.

10.2 Following discussion Commissioners agreed that subject to a number of small agreed amendments, they were content with the general structure of the report.

**11. Alternative Care and Children’s Rights in Northern Ireland**

11.1 Commissioners discussed the Alternative Care and Children’s Rights in Northern Ireland report, the content of which has been already agreed.

11.2 Commissioners discussed launching the report.

**12. Human Rights Monitoring and Capacity Building: Places of Detention**

12.1 Commissioners agreed to a visit of Maghaberry including to visit foreign national prisoners detained and also visits to Larne immigration detention facility and Lakewood Regional Secure Care Centre.

**13. Bill of Rights**

13.1 Commissioners discussed the recent UU Transitional Justice Institution launch of research into Political Capacity: Advancing a Bill of Rights at Stormont which was attended by the Chief Commissioner and Commissioner Corey.

**14. Any other Business**

14.1 Nothing to report.