



**194th COMMISSION MEETING
THURSDAY 24 AUGUST 2017 AT 10:00 am
IN THE OFFICE OF
THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Christine Collins
John Corey
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds (agenda items 1-8)
Paul Yam

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant (agenda items 1-8)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs) (agenda items 1-7 and 13-14)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) (agenda items 7 and 9-14)
Hannah Russell, Policy and Research Officer (agenda item 9)
Rhyannon Blythe, Senior Legal and Research Officer (agenda items 11 and 12)
Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant (screening of documentary project during lunch)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2017 and closed minutes of 26 June 2017 (HRC194.1)

2.1 The minutes of the 26 June 2017 were agreed following a minor amendment.

Action: Minutes of 26 June 2017 meeting to be uploaded to the Commission's website.

2.2 The closed minutes of the 26 June 2017 were agreed.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Commissioners agreed that the research paper on the adequacy of services for injured victims of the Troubles had met with the business plan objective and that it will be recommended to the incoming Commissioners to inform a think piece on the issue of pension proposals for injured victims of the Troubles (paragraph 10 of the previous minutes refers).

4. Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC194.2)

4.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on meetings and events he had attended since the last meeting. These included:

- Institute for Fiscal Studies research advisory group for Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- UU seminar launching a draft Bill of Rights document (with Commissioner Corey)
- Meeting Chief Commissioner/Chief Executive of Equality Commission
- Meeting Olive MacLeod, Chief Executive RQIA
- Speaking at Human Rights Lawyers Association meeting in London on developments in termination law in Northern Ireland
- visiting Beechcroft child and adolescent in-patient unit (with Commissioner Reynolds)
- Meeting Martina Anderson, Sinn Fein MEP
- Meeting NI Association of Social Workers

- Meeting Bernadette Roberts – Political and Economic Officer, US Consulate General
 - Meeting Damien McAllister, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
 - NIHRC convened NGOs meeting on Strategic Litigation
- 4.2 The Chief Commissioner updated the meeting on upcoming events he is attending which included:
- Lord Mayor of Belfast’s inauguration dinner
 - launch of civil justice review – Royal Courts of Justice
 - speaker at Chartered Institute for Housing conference on social care, ageing and human rights
 - speaker at NI Council for Racial Equality seminar on Brexit, racial equality and human rights implications
- 4.3 Commissioner Reynolds raised the point made at the last meeting whether all meetings/engagements with political parties should be listed in the Commission’s annual report. This suggestion was not supported by other Commissioners.

5. Commissioners’ Reports

- 5.1 Commissioner Corey reported on the UU seminar, which the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive also attended, launching a draft model of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland drawing on the Commission’s 2008 report.
- Action: Report to be shared with incoming Commissioners.**
- 5.2 Commissioner Reynolds reported on the visit to Beechcroft child and adolescent in-patient unit, which the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive attended along with staff. A follow up letter requesting data on a number of issues has been made.

6. Chief Executive's Report (HRC194.3)

- 6.1 The Chief Executive updated the Commission on the following:
- Progress on securing a Joint Secretariat with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
 - A conference call with the Bermuda NHRI to discuss the judgement in their case on same-sex civil marriage.
 - A meeting with the CEO and Senior Staff of the RQIA on 27 June to discuss common areas of work and share 2017-18 Business Plans
 - A meeting with the NI Commonwealth Games Council and UNICEF on 30 June to discuss the upcoming Commonwealth Youth Games and further collaborative opportunities.
 - Meetings in London with FCO, NIO, Commonwealth Secretariat, Cabinet Office and JCHR
- 6.2 The Chief Executive updated Commissioners on the recruitment for the restructured posts and confirmed that all involved were successful. The Chief Executive and the Commissioners expressed their congratulations to those involved.
- 6.3 Commissioners were updated on ongoing business cases.
- 6.4 The Chief Executive discussed the Risk Register with Commissioners highlighting a concern around Internal Auditors and the contract with Colliers re: fire alarm. Both issues were being actively pursued and Commissioners noted the issues.
- 6.5 Commissioners were updated on the plans for the incoming Commissioners' inductions and emphasised that they would welcome some involvement between existing and new Commissioners.

7. Finance Report (HRC194.4)

Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) joined the meeting.

- 7.1 Commissioners were updated on the Finance Report with an update on the external audit and recent expenditure.
- 7.2 Commissioners noted the positive sick absence figures.

Lorraine Hamill left the meeting.

8. Code of Governance (HRC194.5)

- 8.1 Commissioners discussed the Code of Governance and Standing Orders point by point making a number of minor amendments, particularly to paragraphs 6 and 20.
- 8.2 Commissioners agreed that a review of the Code of Governance should take place within three years at most and should ideally align with the completion of the review of the NIO Framework Document due to commence in May 2018.

During the lunch break Commissioners were shown a screening of the documentary film with the Prince's Trust on Mental Health and Young People.

The Commissioners endorsed the film and welcomed that the film would be available in both a summary and slightly longer version. Some additional useful information sources were suggested for the film.

Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant joined the meeting for the screening.

Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) joined the meeting.

Hannah Russell, Policy and Research Officer joined the meeting.

9. Investigation into Travellers' Accommodation (HRC194.6)

- 9.1 A first draft of the investigation report was considered. Commissioners were asked to consider the structure, extent and presentation of the report alongside the

recommendations and conclusions and provide comments.

- 9.2 The length of the report was noted though Commissioners agreed the document was very rich in important detail.
- 9.3 Commissioners discussed the dissemination of the report and how it would be shared with Travellers and others. In particular, a strategic level summary of the investigation report was suggested.
- 9.4 Commissioners congratulated staff involved in producing an excellent first draft of the report and offered a number of comments and suggestions.
- 9.5 It was anticipated that an updated version, taking into consideration comments/amendments would be presented to the new Commissioners at their first Commission meeting.
Action: A further draft of the Investigation Report to be provided to the next Commission meeting.

10. Annual Statement Chapters (HRC194.7)

- 10.1 Commissioners reviewed the Annual Statement chapter on Right to Health. Commissioners agreed the position statement subject to any amendment required following the session on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) taking place this week.
Action: Mental Capacity section to be updated as required following UN CRPD session
- 10.2 It was noted that the position statement on Termination of Pregnancy would continue to be updated following the Supreme Court case hearing in October 2017.
Action: Termination of Pregnancy section to be updated as required
- 10.3 Commissioners reviewed the Annual Statement chapter on Right to Culture and agreed with the position statement.

Hannah Russell left the meeting.

Rhyannon Blythe, Senior Legal and Research Officer joined the meeting.

11. IVF (HRC194.8)

- 11.1 Commissioners considered the paper on Access to Publicly Funded Fertility Treatment in Northern Ireland, including an opinion from Counsel and agreed that a letter should be sent to the Department of Health seeking clarity on what changes, if any have been made, to the criteria for publicly funded fertility treatment. This would be followed up by a pre-action letter, if required.

12. Legal Update and Application for Assistance (HRC194.9)

- 12.1 The Senior Legal and Research Officer updated Commissioners on the Termination of Pregnancy case. It was noted that the case would be heard in the Supreme Court from 24-26 October 2017.
- 12.2 Commissioners considered the application for assistance to intervene in an appeal on the question of use of a separate independent Registered Intermediary being available in legal consultations from the court hearing itself (HRC194.9). The Commission agreed that assistance would not be granted based on the Commission not being able to add any value to the case.
Action: Senior Legal and Research Officer to write to the applicant confirming the Commission's decision

Rhyannon Blythe left the meeting.

Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs) joined the meeting.

13. Communications Report (HRC194.10)

- 13.1 Commissioners noted that a tendering exercise had been completed for the development of short animations/films and that nine tenders were currently

being considered.

- 13.2 It was noted that the Commission was participating in Belfast Culture Night on 22 September 2017, and the documentary project with the Prince's Trust on Mental Health and Young People would be launched at the event. Commissioners expressed their support for the Commission actively participating in Culture Night.

14. Any Other Business

- 14.1 Commissioners discussed the amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill being proposed as part of a joint initiative being led by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in England and Wales. This approach to responding to the Bill was endorsed. Commissioners also noted the need to maintain liaison with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on the implications of the EU exit for Northern Ireland.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.