



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

113th COMMISSION MEETING (POLICY)

**HELD ON MONDAY 14 DECEMBER 2009 AT 1:00PM
AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH ST, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Monica McWilliams, Chief Commissioner
Jonathan Bell
Tom Duncan
Alan Henry (agenda item 1)
Ann Hope
Colm Larkin (agenda items 1–6)
Eamonn O'Neill
Geraldine Rice
Daphne Trimble

In attendance: Peter O'Neill, Chief Executive
Don Leeson, Head of Corporate Services
Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Head of Legal Services, Policy and
Research

Apologies: Colin Harvey

1. Minutes of the 112th Commission (Governance) meeting (HRC 113.1)

- 1.1 The minutes of the 112th Commission (Governance) meeting held on 16 November 2009 were agreed as an accurate record, subject to a number of agreed amendments.

2. Matters arising

- 2.1 Commissioners approved the terms of reference for, and membership of, a working group to advise on the further development and implementation of a Commission strategy for engagement with Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist communities (paragraph 2.1 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).
- 2.2 Commissioners noted the report on the equality impact assessment of the Commission's draft Strategic Plan for 2009–11, which was approved by the Equality Committee on 23 November 2009 (paragraph 2.2 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).
- 2.3 The Chief Commissioner reported on a visit by a delegation of Commissioners and staff to Westminster on 7/8 December 2009 as part of the Commission's programme of work on the Bill of Rights (paragraph 3.5 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). The visit included meetings with MPs, members of the House of Lords and the Joint Committee on Human Rights. Commissioners noted that Dominic Grieve QC MP, the Shadow Justice Secretary, will visit the Commission on 4 February 2010.
- 2.4 Commissioners noted NIPSA's interest in the proposed review of the operational effectiveness of the Commission (paragraph 4.2 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). Terms of reference for the review will be considered at the next Commission (Governance) meeting.
- 2.5 Commissioners noted that the joint report with the Equality Commission on the scope of human trafficking in Northern Ireland will now be launched on 29 January 2010 at a round table event to be hosted by the Equality Commission (paragraph 7.3.2 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). The Commission expressed its appreciation to Ann Hope for her work on the advisory group supporting the research project and to the Head of Legal Services, Policy and Research for bringing the project to completion.
- 2.6 Commissioners noted that the bid for funding for the Commission's work in respect of the independent monitoring mechanism for the UN Convention of Disability Rights has been submitted to the Office for Disability Issues (paragraph 10.1 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). The outcome of the bid is expected to be announced in January 2010.

3. Developing the Commission's response to consultation by the NIO on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

- 3.1 The Bill of Rights Committee has been reconstituted. Revised terms of reference, with the following responsibilities for the Committee, were approved by the Commission:
- i. To develop and implement a communications strategy to disseminate widely and promote the Commission's advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.
 - ii. To consider draft promotional and guidance documents and materials to support implementation of the Commission's advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.
 - iii. To co-ordinate, and support in partnership with political parties and representatives from civil society, an effective lobby to maintain momentum for the implementation of the Commission's advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.
 - iv. To scrutinise, and develop the Commission's response to, the NIO consultation paper on *A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Next Steps* for approval by the Commission.
 - v. To monitor developments on a possible UK Bill of Rights Responsibilities and related initiatives at Westminster and give effect to the Commission's response to proposals from government and other relevant parties as appropriate.
 - vi. Any other matters where requested to do so by the Chief Commissioner or the Commission.

Dates for Committee meetings will be circulated to Commissioners in due course.

- 3.2 The Commission will consider its response to the consultation document on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, which was published by the NIO on 30 November 2009, through the work of the Bill of Rights Committee.

4. Progressing work on the Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland

- 4.1 It was noted that the report on the seminar on the Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland, organised jointly with the Irish Human Rights Commission and University College Dublin, which was held on 6 November 2009 in Dublin, is being prepared and will be circulated to Commissioners in January 2010.
- 4.2 Work on the Charter of Rights will be discussed at the next meeting of the Joint Committee with the Irish Human Rights Commission, which is scheduled for 3 February 2010.

5. Progress report on the Commission's investigation into the rights of older people in residential nursing care homes

- 5.1 Commissioners noted a progress report on the Commission's investigation into the rights of older people in residential nursing care homes, and follow-up activities in respect of previous investigations.
- 5.2 Commissioners noted the replacement of a nursing home, which was found not to meet the selection criteria, in the sample of homes to be visited as part of the investigation. No Commissioner declared a conflict of interest with the newly selected nursing home.
- 5.3 Commissioners noted the co-option of an Investigation Worker on to the Refugee Action Group's advisory panel.

6. Draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (HRC 113.2).

- 6.1 Commissioners considered changes to the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- 6.2 A number of further drafting changes to the MoU were proposed by Commissioners. These will be discussed with the EHRC and SHRC, and a revised draft document will be considered at the next Commission meeting.

7. Current consultation documents (HRC 113.3)

- 7.1 Commissioners noted the consultation documents, which the Commission has received and is currently working on.
- 7.2 The Commission's response to consultation by the Public Prosecution Service on interim guidance on the offence of assisted suicide was approved, subject to agreed drafting changes.
- 7.3 Commissioners noted that the Chief Commissioner is due to attend the next meeting of the Ministerial Forum on Safer Custody on 15 December 2009. A report on this will be given to the next Commission meeting.

8. Any other business

- 8.1 There was no other business.

9. Dates of next Commission meetings:

- 9.1 The next Commission (Governance) meeting will be held on 25 January 2010 in Temple Court, Belfast.
- 9.2 The next Commission (Policy) meeting will be held on 22 February 2010 in Temple Court, Belfast.

The meeting closed at 2.20pm.

Approved: _____

Date: _____

25 January 2010