



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

122nd COMMISSION MEETING (POLICY)

**HELD ON MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2010 AT 10.00AM
AT NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL,
TOWN HALL, THE CASTLE, BANGOR, BT20 4BT**

Present: Monica McWilliams, Chief Commissioner
Tom Duncan
Ann Hope
Colm Larkin
Eamonn O'Neill
Geraldine Rice

In attendance: Don Leeson, Head of Corporate Services (except agenda item 3)
Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Head of Legal Services, Policy and Research (except agenda item 3)
David Russell, Head of Communications and Education (except agenda item 3)

Apologies: Colin Harvey
Alan Henry

Commissioners noted that this was the last Commission meeting before Colm Larkin steps down from the Commission when his current term of office ends on 30 November 2010. Commissioners expressed their appreciation for his work as a Commissioner during the past three years.

1. Minutes of previous meetings (HRC 122.1(a) and (b))

- 1.1 The minutes of the 121st Commission (Governance) meeting held on 18 October 2010 were agreed as an accurate record.

- 1.2 The minutes of the special Commission meeting held on 1 November 2010 to consider the outcome of the Senior Management Review were agreed as an accurate record, subject to an amendment.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of 121st Commission (Governance) meeting

- 2.1 Commissioners noted the Commission's budget allocations for the next four financial years, following the outcome of the Spending Review (paragraph 2.2 of the minutes of 121st Commission (Governance) meeting refers).
- 2.2 Commissioners received an update on the proposed timetable for the appointment of new Commissioners (paragraph 5.15 of the minutes of 121st Commission (Governance) meeting refers).
- 2.3 Commissioners noted that the Annual Report and Accounts for 2009–10 were signed off on 1 November 2010 and have been sent to the National Audit Office for certification by the Comptroller and Auditor General (paragraph 7.1.3 of the minutes of 121st Commission (Governance) meeting refers). The Annual Report and Accounts will then be laid before Parliament and published shortly afterwards.
- 2.4 Commissioners received a report on the round table event, which was held on 21 October 2010, to brief stakeholders on the Commission's response to the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Programme (paragraph 8.2 of the minutes of 121st Commission (Governance) meeting refers). Commissioners expressed their appreciation to everyone involved in organising the event and agreed that this is a useful way of communicating the Commission's position on major policy issues.
- 2.5 Commissioners were asked to let the Head of Corporate Services have any final drafting points on the new Code of Governance as soon as possible (paragraph 10.2 of the minutes of 121st Commission (Governance) meeting refers). In the meantime, Commissioners noted that the draft Code has been sent to the Northern Ireland Office for comments.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of the special Commission meeting held on 1 November 2010

- 3.1 Commissioners noted progress in taking forward the outcome of the Senior Management Review.

4. Business Plan 2010–11 progress report (HRC 122.2)

- 4.1 Commissioners noted progress in implementing the Business Plan for 2010–11. Staff were commended for their work to date in taking forward the objectives set out in the Business Plan.
- 4.2 Commissioners noted that a case in the Commission's own name, which was being scoped, to protect the rights of migrants in respect of 'earned citizenship' may no longer be required as the Government has signalled its intention to withdraw the scheme, which was due to be introduced in 2011, as a result of provisions in the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.
- 4.3 Commissioners noted that the Commission's application for re-accreditation as a national human rights institution at the United Nations, which is due for renewal in May 2011, has to be submitted in January 2011. The Head of Legal Services, Policy and Research will prepare the application for consideration by Commissioners.
- 4.4 Commissioners noted the range of work being undertaken by staff in respect of dealing with outstanding aspects of the conflict, including the outcomes of recent inquiries and planning for a roundtable event for stakeholders on these issues in 2011. It was agreed that the Commission will seek a meeting with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to discuss these matters.

5. Draft Strategic Plan 2011–13

- 5.1 Commissioners received a presentation on the revised draft Strategic Plan for 2011–13.
- 5.2 The draft Strategic Plan was approved for public consultation.
- 5.3 Commissioners thanked staff for their work in developing the draft Strategic Plan.

6. Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland

- 6.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on the outcome of meetings with Parliamentarians and other stakeholders, which were held during the Commission's visit to Westminster on 19–21 October 2010 to discuss developments in respect of the Bill of Rights.
- 6.2 Commissioners noted a copy of a letter that the Prime Minister sent to Michael Connarty MP on 27 October 2010 in response to a question he asked about the Bill of Rights at Prime Minister's Questions on 20 October 2010. It was agreed that the Chief Commissioner should write to the Prime Minister to about issues raised in the letter. It was also agreed to follow these issues up in a meeting with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as well as seek an update on the NIO's consultation on the Bill of Rights, the responses to which the Commission had been informed in their recent meeting with Hugo Swire MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland, would be published in October 2010.
- 6.3 Commissioners expressed their appreciation to Michael Connarty MP for sending the Commission a copy of the Prime Minister's letter.
- 6.4 Commissioners noted that Lord (Trevor) Smith and Lord Dubs have tabled a motion in respect of the Bill of Rights for discussion at the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly on 22 November 2010, on the Isle of Man, which the Chief Commissioner will attend.
- 6.5 Commissioners noted that, with work in respect of the Bill of Rights and Charter of Rights now a standing agenda item for Commission (Policy) meetings, the Bill of Rights Committee is scheduled to meet on 8 December 2010 to conclude its outstanding business.

7. Arrangements for the joint conference with the Equality Commission on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 1 December 2010

- 7.1 Commissioners noted the arrangements for the joint conference with the Equality Commission on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 1 December 2010.

8. Current consultation documents (HRC 122.3)

- 8.1 Commissioners noted the list of current consultations which are being reviewed by the Commission for possible response, and progress on thematic work and follow-up action on previous policy responses.
- 8.2 A draft letter to the Department of Justice in respect of the Justice Bill was circulated to Commissioners for comments. It was agreed that the letter should include concerns about the use of 'live links' in criminal proceedings.
- 8.3 A draft research paper on the eligibility of migrants for medical care. 'Access Denied', was circulated to Commissioners for comments.
- 8.4 Commissioners agreed a response to the Department of Justice to issues raised in its consultation document, 'Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings'.
- 8.5 Commissioners noted the outcome of an Assembly debate in respect of the Irish language. Commissioners also noted the appreciation expressed by MLAs for briefing on this issue and a request to address the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure on 25 November 2010.

9. Any other business

- 9.1 Commissioners considered a confidential personnel matter, which is dealt with in a closed minute.

10. Dates of next Commission meetings

- 10.1 The next Commission (Governance) meeting will be held on 13 December 2010, in Temple Court, Belfast.
- 10.2 The next Commission (Policy) meeting will be held on 24 January 2011, in Temple Court, Belfast.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm and was followed by a reception hosted by North Down Borough Council for local stakeholders.

Approved: _____

Date: _____

13 December 2010