



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

123rd COMMISSION MEETING (GOVERNANCE)

**HELD ON MONDAY 13 DECEMBER 2010 AT 10.00AM
AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH ST, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Monica McWilliams, Chief Commissioner
Tom Duncan
Alan Henry
Ann Hope
Eamonn O'Neill

In attendance: Don Leeson, Head of Corporate Services (except
agenda item 9)
Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Head of Legal Services, Policy
and Research (except agenda item 9)
David Russell, Head of Communications and Education
(except agenda item 9)
Mairead Hegarty, Caseworker (agenda item 5)

Apologies: Colin Harvey
Geraldine Rice

Commissioners expressed their appreciation to Peter O'Neill, who stepped down as Chief Executive, with effect from 1 December 2010.

Commissioners expressed their condolences to Colin Harvey following his recent bereavement.

1. Minutes of previous meetings (HRC 123.1)

- 1.1 The minutes of the 122nd Commission (Policy) meeting held on 15 November 2010 were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of 122nd Commission (Policy) meeting

- 2.1 Commissioners noted progress in respect of the appointment of new Commissioners (paragraph 2.2 of the minutes of 122nd Commission (Policy) meeting refers).
- 2.2 Commissioners noted that the new Code of Governance will be finalised in the light of comments by Commissioners and published shortly (paragraph 2.4 of the minutes of 122nd Commission (Policy) meeting refers).
- 2.3 Commissioners noted the successful outcome of the joint conference with the Equality Commission on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 1 December 2010, and congratulated everyone involved in organising and facilitating the event (paragraph 7.1 of the minutes of 122nd Commission (Policy) meeting refers).
- 2.4 The Chief Commissioner reported back on the Commission's appearance before the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure on 25 November 2010 to give evidence in respect of human rights and the Irish language (paragraph 8.5 of the minutes of 122nd Commission (Policy) meeting refers).

3. Report from the Chief Commissioner (HRC 123.2)

- 3.1 Commissioners noted the Chief Commissioner's Report.
- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on the Commission's visit to Maghaberry prison on 9 December 2010. This visit focused on the conditions of separated prisoners. A detailed report is being prepared for consideration at the next meeting of the Detention, Policing and Justice Committee.
- 3.3 Commissioners noted that the Chief Commissioner represented the Commission at the funerals of three individuals who were 'disappeared' during the Troubles to lend support to the families. The Commission marked International Human Rights Day with a press release reinforcing the need for anyone with information on the 'disappeared' to come forward. Commissioners commended the work of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains.

4. Reports from Commissioners

- 4.1 Ann Hope reported on her attendance at an event, which was organised via Amnesty International and facilitated by the Southall Black Sisters on 16 November 2010, to consult on a strategy to address violence against black and minority ethnic women.

5. Reports from Committees

Audit and Risk Management Committee

- 5.1 It was noted that the next Audit and Risk Management Committee is scheduled for 15 December 2010.

Bill of Rights Committee

- 5.2 Ann Hope reported on the work of the Bill of Rights Committee.
- 5.3 Commissioners noted that the Commission has written to the Prime Minister to follow up on issues raised by the Prime Minister in his letter to Michael Connarty MP of 27 October 2010 in response to a question asked about the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland at Prime Minister's Questions on 20 October 2010.
- 5.4 Commissioners noted that the motion tabled by Lord (Trevor) Smith and Lord Dubs in support of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland was passed at the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly on 22 November 2010, on the Isle of Man.
- 5.5 The Commission will seek a meeting with Owen Paterson MP, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to discuss the Bill of Rights. In the meantime, it was noted that the Commission will continue to press the NIO to publish responses to its consultation document from 2009–10 on the Bill of Rights.
- 5.6 Commissioners noted that the work of the Bill of Rights Committee will now be taken forward at Commission (Policy) meetings.

Detention, Policing and Justice Committee

- 5.7 Eamonn O'Neill reported on the work of the Detention, Policing and Justice Committee.

- 5.8 The Chair of the Detention, Policing and Justice Committee reported on a presentation given by Desi Bannon, Director of Adult Services, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to the Committee on 7 December 2010 to discuss his work with the Maghaberry Service Improvement Project Board and the Ministerial Forum on Safer Custody. His presentation will be circulated to all Commissioners.
- 5.9 The Chair of the Detention, Policing and Justice Committee commended a policy paper on the privatisation of prisons, which had been prepared for the Committee by a Policy Worker. The paper will be circulated to all Commissioners.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee

- 5.10 Commissioners noted that the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee meeting, which was scheduled for 8 December 2010, was postponed because of bereavement.

Equality Committee

- 5.11 It was noted that the next Equality Committee meeting is scheduled for 14 December 2010. This will be the Committee's last meeting for the time being, with the Committee's work taken forward at Commission (Governance) meetings.

Legal Committee

- 5.12 Alan Henry reported on the work of the Legal Committee.
- 5.13 Commissioners agreed in principle to, if necessary, take proceedings on the issue of the rights of unmarried and same sex couples to apply to adopt in Northern Ireland.

Minutes of committees and working groups (HRC 121.3)

- 5.14 Commissioners noted the minutes of the following meetings:
- Bill of Rights Committee – meeting held on 31 August 2010.
 - Detention, Policing and Justice Committee – meeting held on 8 September 2010.
 - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee – meeting held on 31 August 2010.
 - Legal Committee – held on 8 September 2010.

6. Team reports

6.1 Corporate Services (HRC 123.4)

- 6.1.1 Commissioners noted the Corporate Services report.
- 6.1.2 Commissioners noted virements from sub-budgets where there are easements to offset pressures which have emerged in other sub-budgets.
- 6.1.3 Commissioners noted that the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts for 2009–10 will be laid in Parliament on 16 December 2010 and published shortly afterwards.
- 6.1.4 Commissioners noted that interviews in respect of the 'professional placement' to work on the Charter of Rights are scheduled for 16 December 2010.

6.2 Communications and Education (HRC 123.5)

- 6.2.1 Commissioners noted the Communications and Education report.
- 6.2.2 Commissioners noted the positive feedback from Commissioners and staff on media training, which was held on 29 October 2010. Further, follow-up training will be arranged and delivered using in-house expertise.
- 6.2.3 Commissioners passed on their congratulations to the Education Worker in respect of the positive feedback received following delivery of the recent human rights training programme. Commissioners also noted that, following requests, bespoke training is being developed for a number of groups of staff in the health sector, including social workers and union representatives.
- 6.2.4 Commissioners noted that the Commission's draft Strategic Plan for 2011–13 has been published for consultation. A consultation event for stakeholders has been scheduled for 1 February 2011. The closing date for consultation responses is 28 February 2011.

6.3 Legal Services, Policy and Research (HRC 123.6)

- 6.3.1 Commissioners noted the Legal Services, Policy and Research report.

- 6.3.2 Following on from the Commission's correspondence to Government on 'Earned Citizenship' and the anticipated case to challenge the reforms, Commissioners noted that the Home Secretary has announced the abandonment of the previous government's proposals in this area.
- 6.3.3 Commissioners noted that members of the Legal Services, Policy and Research Team attended an informal reception in Parliament Buildings with members of the Assembly's Justice Committee on 29 November 2010 to discuss the Justice Bill.
- 6.3.4 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.

7. Revised pay arrangements for Commission staff (HRC 123.7)

- 7.1 Commissioners approved a proposal to consult NIPSA in respect of changes to the Commission's pay arrangements, in line with those of the NIO.
- 7.2 The outcome of this consultation will be considered by the Commission in February 2011.

8. Application for re-accreditation as a national human rights institution at the United Nations (HRC 123.8)

- 8.1 Commissioners noted that the Commission is required to submit its application for formal re-accreditation as a national human rights institution at the United Nations by 22 January 2011 (the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' letter to the Chief Commissioner of 26 October 2010 refers). The draft application will be circulated to Commissioners for comment in due course.
- 8.2 Commissioners noted that the application will be examined by the International Co-ordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights' Sub-Committee on Accreditation when it sits on 23-27 May 2011.

9. Implementation of the outcome of the Senior Management Review – progress report

9.1 This agenda item is dealt with in a closed minute.

10. Any other business

10.1 There was no other business.

11. Dates of next Commission meetings

11.1 The next Commission (Policy) meeting will be on 24 January 2011, in Temple Court, Belfast.

11.2 The next Commission (Governance) meeting will be held on 21 February 2011, in Temple Court, Belfast.

The meeting closed at 2.00pm.

Approved: _____

Date: 24 January 2011