



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

## **127<sup>th</sup> COMMISSION MEETING (GOVERNANCE)**

**HELD ON MONDAY 18 APRIL 2011 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

**In attendance:** Virginia McVea, Director  
Don Leeson, Head of Corporate Services (except  
agenda items 6 and 10)  
Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Head of Legal Services, Policy  
and Research (except agenda items 6 and 10)  
David Russell, Head of Communications and Education  
(except agenda items 6 and 10)

**Apologies:** Colin Harvey  
Geraldine Rice

Commissioners formally welcomed Virginia McVea to her first Commission meeting in her capacity as Director.

### **1. Minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting (HRC 126.1)**

- 1.1 The minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting held on 21 March 2011 were agreed as an accurate record, subject to agreed amendments.

## **2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting**

- 2.1 The Chief Commissioner reported back on the outcome of meetings with stakeholders at Westminster on 28–30 March 2011 (paragraph 3.3 of the minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting refers). Commissioners expressed their appreciation to the Press and Public Affairs Worker for her help in organising the programme of meetings.
- 2.2 Commissioners noted progress on the work on the Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland (paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 of the minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting refer). The Chief Commissioner and the President of the Irish Human Rights Commission will write to the Co-Chairs of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly to seek an invitation for both Commissions to address the forum on the Charter of Rights.
- 2.3 Commissioners noted progress on the Commission's report into the rights of older people in residential nursing care, which will now be published in August 2011 (paragraph 6.1 of the minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting refers).
- 2.4 Commissioners noted that the Commission's Strategic Plan for 2011–13, and the Business Plan to operationalise its first year, have been submitted to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for approval (paragraphs 7.4 and 8.2 of the minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting refer). The Commission will write to consultees with details of the outcome of their consultation responses on the Strategic Plan, once it has been formally approved.
- 2.5 Commissioners noted that a submission has been made to the NIO to seek approval to change the pay system for the Commission's staff, as a consequence of changes to the NIO's pay arrangements (paragraph 9.3 of the minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Commission (Policy) meeting refers).

## **3. Report from the Chief Commissioner**

- 3.1 Commissioners noted the meetings and events attended by the Chief Commissioner since the last Commission (Governance) meeting.

- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on her meeting with the Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, which was held on 31 March 2011. The Commission raised a number of issues at the meeting, including full body searches, the separated prisoners' regime, the Prison Review, and the building of a women's prison in Northern Ireland.
- 3.3 Commissioners noted that the Commission is working with the Irish Human Rights Commission in respect of the investigation into the death of Denis Donaldson.
- 3.4 The Chief Commissioner reported on her meeting with the US Consul, which was held on 8 April 2011.
- 3.5 Commissioners noted the Chief Commissioner's attendance at the annual Palm Sunday memorial mass for the Families of the Disappeared on 17 April 2011 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

#### **4. Reports from Commissioners**

- 4.1 Commissioners noted that Ann Hope will represent the Commission at the launch of the Women's Manifesto for the Northern Ireland Assembly Elections, on 19 April 2011.

#### **5. Reports from Committees**

- 5.1 Commissioners noted the minutes of the following meetings (paper HRC 127.2 refers):
  - Audit and Risk Management Committee – meeting held on 15 December 2010.
  - Detention, Policing and Justice Committee – meeting held on 7 December 2010.
  - Legal Committee – meetings held on 26 October 2010 and 1 February 2011.
- 5.2 It was agreed that Ann Hope will chair the Detention, Policing and Justice Committee, following Eamonn O'Neill's departure from the Commission.

## **6. Report from the Director**

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

## **7. Team reports**

### **7.1 Corporate Services (HRC 127.3)**

- 7.1.1 Commissioners noted the Corporate Services report.
- 7.1.2 Commissioners noted that a complaint of discrimination brought by an unsuccessful interviewee for a post with the Commission was dismissed unanimously by the Fair Employment Tribunal. It was further noted that, in summing up, the Chair of the Tribunal paid tribute to Ann Hope, who gave evidence on behalf of the Commission, and commended the integrity of the Commission's selection procedures.
- 7.1.3 Commissioners noted the positive outcome of the internal audit of the Commission's corporate governance arrangements.
- 7.1.4 Commissioners noted the timetable for preparing and auditing the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts for 2010–11. In preparation for the audit, Commissioners and the Management Team were asked to complete a declaration in respect of any related-party transactions conducted during 2010–11 and update the Register of Interests for 2011–12.

### **7.2 Communications and Education (HRC 127.4)**

- 7.2.1 Commissioners noted the Communications and Education report.
- 7.2.2 Commissioners noted the positive feedback received in respect of a training event on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which was delivered by Commission staff to stakeholders on 21 March 2011, in Dungannon. Other human rights education work was also noted, including training for social workers and a facilitated workshop for officials at the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

- 7.2.3 Commissioners noted the programme of workshops to discuss aspects of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with disabled people, which is currently taking place, and which will provide evidence for use in the Commission's report on implementation of the Convention.
- 7.2.4 Commissioners noted that the Commission's Publications Protocol will be tabled for consideration at the next Commission meeting.

### **7.3 Legal Services, Policy and Research (HRC 127.5)**

- 7.3.1 Commissioners noted the Legal Services, Policy and Research report, including a summary of the legal cases being progressed by the Commission. Clarification will be provided on the approach adopted by the Law Society and Legal Services Commission in respect of Legal Aid assessments.
- 7.3.2 Commissioners noted the list of 10 legislative bills, which the Commission has commented on or given evidence in respect of, and which were finalised before the dissolution of the Assembly in March 2011.
- 7.3.3 Commissioners expressed their appreciation to the staff involved in organising the round table discussion with stakeholders on access to publicly-funded medical care for non-British / Irish citizens, which the Commission hosted on 8 April 2011.
- 7.3.4 Commissioners noted the rescheduling of the programme of round table discussions with stakeholders on aspects of dealing with the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland.
- 7.3.5 It was agreed that an update on the work of the independent mechanism for CRPD will be provided to the next Commission meeting, which will include progress in respect of mental health policy and legislative developments arising out of the Bamford Review.
- 7.3.6 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. Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – draft parallel report (HRC 127.6)**

- 8.1 Commissioners noted a comprehensive paper of policy issues relating to CERD. The paper will be used to inform the Commission's response to the CERD Committee at the UN, following publication of the themes on which it wishes to examine the UK.

## **9. Devolving Corporation Tax to Northern Ireland – draft submission (HRC 127.7)**

- 9.1 Commissioners approved the Commission's response to consultation by HM Treasury in respect of devolving Corporation Tax powers to Northern Ireland. Commissioners noted that the response will be updated in light of changes arising from the recent UK budget announcements by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

## **10. Implementation of the outcome of the Senior Management Review – progress report**

- 10.1 This agenda item is dealt with in a closed minute.

## **11. Any other business**

- 11.1 There was no other business.

## **12. Dates of next Commission meetings**

- 12.1 The next Commission (Policy) meeting will be on 23 May 2011, in Temple Court, Belfast.
- 12.2 The next Commission (Governance) meeting will be held on 27 June 2011, in Temple Court, Belfast.

**The meeting closed at 2.00pm.**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

23 May 2011