



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE 98TH COMMISSION MEETING

**HELD ON MONDAY 12 MAY 2008 AT THE
NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST BT1 1NA**

Present: Monica McWilliams, Chief Commissioner
Jonathan Bell
Tom Duncan
Colin Harvey
Alan Henry
Ann Hope
Colm Larkin
Eamonn O'Neill
Daphne Trimble

In attendance: Bill Smith, Chair of the Audit and Risk Management
Committee
Peter O'Neill, Chief Executive
Nazia Latif, Head of Investigations, Policy and Research
Virginia McVea, Head of Legal Services
David Russell, Head of Communications and Education
Charlene Craig, Information and Publications Worker
(agenda item 14)
Ann Jemphrey, Policy Worker (agenda items 11 and 12)
Michael Hamilton, Strategic Review of Parading Body
(agenda item 13)
Mark McCaffrey, Strategic Review of Parading Body
(agenda item 13)
Duncan Morrow, Strategic Review of Parading Body
(agenda item 13)

Apologies: Geraldine Rice

1. Minutes of the last meeting (HRC 98.1)

- 1.1 The minutes of the 97th Commission meeting held on 10 March 2008 were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters arising

- 2.1 Commissioners received an update on plans to establish a working group of Commissioners and staff to review event planning (paragraph 6.2 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). The working group will meet on 6 June 2008.
- 2.2 Commissioners noted the arrangements for the launch of an Irish language version of the Commission's Bill of Rights in Schools curriculum resource on 28 May 2008 (paragraph 7.2.3 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

3. Report from the Chief Commissioner (HRC 98.2)

- 3.1 Commissioners noted the Chief Commissioner's report.
- 3.2 Commissioners noted that the Commission has been invited to attend a briefing by the Consultative Group on the Past on 29 May 2008.

4. Reports from Commissioners

- 4.1 Commissioners reported on their recent activities.

5. Minutes of committee and working group meetings (HRC 98.3)

- 5.1 Commissioners noted the minutes of the following meetings:
- Audit and Risk Management Committee – minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2007
 - Bill of Rights Working Group – minutes of the meetings held on 28 February, 13 March and 1 April 2008
 - Detention, Policing and Justice Committee – minutes of the meetings held on 12 February and 4 March 2008

- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee – minutes of the meetings held on 20 February and 1 April 2008
 - Legal Committee – minutes of the meetings held on 26 February and 31 March 2008 and the emergency meeting held on 4 March 2008
 - Policy Committee – minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2008.
- 5.2 Following discussions at the Policy Committee meeting on 14 April 2008, Commissioners formally approved an investigation, which may make use of the new powers granted to the Commission under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007. The investigation will focus on the issue of homelessness for migrants, asylum seekers, and families in circumstances where they are excluded from state assistance and other forms of public support.
- 5.3 Commissioners reviewed the workloads associated with the Detention, Policing and Justice Committee and the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee and agreed to reduce the frequency of meetings for the remainder of the year. Secretariat support to these committees will be reviewed by the Management Team.

6. Chief Executive's report (HRC 98.4)

- 6.1 Commissioners noted the Chief Executive's report.
- 6.2 The Chief Executive reported on the outcomes of the 20th session of the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, which was held on 14–18 April 2008, in Geneva.

7. Team reports

7.1 Corporate Services (HRC 98.5)

- 7.1.1 Commissioners noted the Corporate Services report.
- 7.1.2 Commissioners noted the recent appointments to the temporary Investigations Worker and Caseworker posts, and the outcome of internal trawls for a Legal Assistant and a Research Assistant.

- 7.1.3 Commissioners noted the recruitment of two interns for the summer period.
- 7.1.4 Commissioners noted developments in respect of the Commission's legal budget.
- 7.1.5 Commissioners requested the copies of the report on the outcome of the Commission's staff survey and responses to recent Freedom of Information requests.
- 7.1.6 Commissioners reviewed the register of interests of Commissioners and senior managers, and agreed to forward any changes to the Head of Corporate Services by 16 May 2008.

7.2 Communications and Education (HRC 98.6)

- 7.2.1 Commissioners noted the Communications and Education report.
- 7.2.2 Eamonn O'Neill agreed to an interview for the forthcoming issue of 'NIHRC Review'.
- 7.2.3 A number of Commissioners requested amendments to their business cards.
- 7.2.4 It was proposed that Omagh District Council should be invited to host the Commission's exhibition as part of the arrangements for the Commission meeting scheduled for 15 September 2008.
- 7.2.5 It was agreed to seek legal advice on the methodology to be used in drafting the Commission's advice on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.
- 7.2.6 Commissioners reviewed the outcomes of recent meetings with political parties on the Bill of Rights and arrangements for liaising with each of the sectors represented on the Bill of Rights Forum.

7.3 Legal Services (HRC 98.7)

- 7.3.1 Commissioners noted the Legal Services report.
- 7.3.2 Commissioners noted the list of cases currently undertaken by the Commission.

- 7.3.3 Commissioners noted that a networking meeting of legal practitioners from statutory bodies is planned for June 2008.

7.4 Investigations, Policy and Research (HRC 98.8)

- 7.4.1 Commissioners noted the Investigations, Policy and Research report.
- 7.4.2 Commissioners noted successful interventions at Westminster in relation to the Counter-Terrorism Bill and the Health and Social Care Bill.
- 7.4.3 Commissioners considered the UK's examination by the Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review. The Investigations, Policy and Research team will update Commissioners once the UK Government has formally responded to the recommendations.

8. Draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2007-08 (HRC 98.9)

- 8.1 Commissioners agreed to defer this item for consideration at the next Policy Committee meeting.

9. Audit and Risk Management Committee – Annual Report to the Commission 2007-08 (HRC 98.10)

- 9.1 Commissioners considered the Audit and Risk Management Committee's annual report to the Commission on its operation and effectiveness, together with an assessment against good practice guidelines issued by the National Audit Office.
- 9.2 Commissioners noted the progress in fulfilling the recommendations arising from the recent internal audit report.

10. Corporate Risk Register 2008-09 (HRC 98.11)

- 10.1 Commissioners approved the Commission's risk register for 2008-09.

11. Article 33 of the UN Convention on Disability Rights (HRC 98.12)

- 11.1 Commissioners were briefed on issues in respect of the UK's ratification of the UN Convention on Disability Rights, including the implementation and monitoring arrangements required under Article 33(2). Commissioners noted that further discussions are planned with OFMDFM and the Equality Commission about the implementation and monitoring arrangements.
- 11.2 In the meantime, Commissioners agreed to use the title "UN convention on Disability Rights", as adopted by the government, rather than the official name of the convention ("The convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities"), to reflect the social model of disability.

12. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – treaty monitoring report (HRC 98.13)

- 12.1 Commissioners approved the Commission's shadow reports prepared for the UK's examination under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, subject to some minor amendments.

13. Interim consultative report of the Strategic Review of Parading (HRC 98.14)

- 13.1 Commissioners received a presentation from the Deputy Chair of the Review Body and secretariat members on the Review Body's recently published interim consultative report.
- 13.2 It was agreed that the Commission will formally respond to the consultation paper and arrange further discussions with the Review Body in advance of the publication of their final report.

14. Review of progress in implementing the Library Strategy (HRC 98.15)

- 14.1 Commissioners reviewed progress in implementing the Commission's library strategy and commended staff for their work in progressing it.

15. Any other business

- 15.1 Commissioners reviewed the arrangements for the next meeting of Joint Committee with the Irish Human Rights Commission, which is scheduled to take place on 14 May 2008, in Belfast.
- 15.2 Commissioners noted the appointment of the contractor to support the work of the Joint Committee.

16. Dates of next meetings

- 16.1 The next meeting of the Policy Committee, comprising all Commissioners, takes place on 9 June 2008.
- 16.2 The next business meeting of the Commission will be held on 7 July 2008.

The meeting closed at 4pm.

Approved: _____

Date: _____

7 July 2008