



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

**172<sup>nd</sup> COMMISSION MEETING ON MONDAY 29 JUNE 2015 AT  
10:00 IN THE OFFICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET,  
BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

**In attendance:** Les Allamby  
John Corey  
Marion Reynolds  
Christine Collins  
Grainia Long  
Milton Kerr

**Present:** Virginia McVea, Director  
David Russell, Deputy Director

**Present for part  
of meeting:** Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant  
Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker  
Dan Morris, Research Assistant  
John O'Callaghan, Project Manager

**Apologies:** Alan McBride  
Paul Yam

**1. Minutes of the 171<sup>st</sup> Commission meeting**

1.1 The minutes of the 171<sup>st</sup> Commission meeting were agreed following the amendments below:

- 2.3 Commissioners noted that reference would be made to a long standing legal case in the

Commission's forthcoming submission to ICCPR as part of its analysis of the 'On the Runs' (item 7.5 of previous minutes refers).

- 2.4 Commissioners were updated that no decision has been made on the funding application to allow the Commission to chair the Commonwealth national human rights forum (item 12.3 of the previous minutes refers).

## 2. Matters arising

- 2.1 Commissioner Yam's update on his attendance at the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-Equinet Platform on Hate Crime will be discussed at the August meeting (item 2.1 of previous minutes refers).

**Action: Commissioner Yam to provide a written report on the event for the August Commission meeting.**

- 2.2 Commissioners were updated on the position of the funding application to allow the Commission to chair the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. It was reported that although the Commission would have liked to take up the chair position it was unable to do so without the necessary funding (item 2.3 of the previous minutes refers).

- 2.3 In the absence of Commissioner McBride an update on item 4.1 of the previous meeting is to be carried over to the August Commission meeting.

**Action: Update from Commissioner McBride on the Human Rights Consortium Festival.**

- 2.4 Commissioners were updated on the recent joint statement made by the NIHRC and IHREC to the UN on

the Human Rights Act (item 5.2 of the previous minutes refers).

- 2.5 Commissioners were updated on the evidence session to the Oireachtas Committee on the Human Rights Act (item 5.3 of the previous minutes refers).

**Action: Oireachtas briefing to be emailed.**

- 2.6 Commissioners agreed that contact with local political parties around a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would be initiated (item 5.5 of the previous minutes refers).

- 2.7 Commissioners were updated on the programme for the Community visit to West Belfast scheduled for 1 July (item 7.5 of the previous minutes refers).

**Action: Programme to be emailed to Commissioners.**

- 2.8 Commissioners were updated on recent meeting regarding the Human Rights Inquiry. Discussions during the meetings included the human rights based approach pilots (item 8 of the previous meeting refers).

- 2.9 Commissioners expressed thanks to staff for their work on the report, press and the launch event. (item 8.3 of the previous minutes refers).

- 2.10 A joint meeting with the Equality Commission is to be arranged (item 10.1 of the previous minutes refers).

**Action: Date to be confirmed with ECNI.**

### **3. Chief Commissioner Report**

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on his recent meetings. These included:
- Belfast HSCT
  - US State Department rule of law delegation
  - Gavin Boyd, Rainbow

- Colin Perry, NIO
- Michael Schwartz, Professor of Law and disability Syracuse University New York
- Health and Social Care Board
- David Galloway, RNIB

3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on his recent events. These included:

- Grand Lodge of Ireland launch of victims of the troubles film
- talk to Institute of Professional Legal Studies students
- presentation of certificates to CRC/NIHRC participants joint human rights training
- Inauguration of new Presbyterian Church moderator
- Chaired launch and meeting of Business and human rights forum
- Navi Pillay lecture and dinner
- Speech to launch refugee week at City Hall
- Speech and Q & A for Human Rights Consortium on Magna Carta at Skainos Centre
- evidence to NI Assembly education committee on SEND Bill
- Joint meeting with Irish Commission
- meeting of Turks and Caicos Human Rights Commission
- meetings on 1916 – Ethics of Memory – Glencree, Co Wicklow

3.3 The Chief Commissioner reported on the court case regarding Termination of Pregnancy in circumstances of serious malformation of the foetus, rape or incest that took place from 15-17 June 2015.

#### **4. Commissioner Report**

4.1 Commissioner Corey reported an International Conference for National Human Rights Institutions on Best Practices and Lessons Learned held in Istanbul from 12-13 June 2015. The Commission made contributions to the session on 'the role of NHRIs in socially and culturally polarised societies'.

4.2 Commissioner Collins reported on the Politics plus event she chaired at Stormont. This was part of a series of events arranged by the Independent Monitoring

Mechanism for Northern Ireland (IMNI) that promotes and monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

## **5. Director's Report**

- 5.1 The Director provided a funding update following contact with the NIO. The discussions included the possibility of an in-year reduction of funding and funding and further reductions in future financial years.
- 5.2 It was agreed that this would be discussed further at an extra meeting after 17 July and that the Director would produce a paper on the current budget and demands and possible contingency plans.

## **6. Overview of NICS training**

- 6.1 Commissioners received a presentation on the NICS training from the Project Manager.
- 6.2 Commissioners were given an update on the objectives for the project, an update on the core products and challenges going forward.
- 6.3 Commissioners were updated on the products of the training including the eLearning tool.
- 6.4 Commissioners discussed the launch of the products.
- 6.5 Commissioners agreed that a meeting with the Head of the Civil Service should be sought to enable the training products to be utilized as widely as possible.

**Action: Meeting to be requested with HOCS.**

## **7. Analysis of the Stormont House Agreement**

- 7.1 Commissioners were given an update on the paper analysing of the Stormont House Agreement paper.
- 7.2 It was agreed that the paper would be discussed at the extra meeting held on 17 July.

## **8. Statutory Functions Report**

- 8.1 Commissioners noted the legal functions paper.
- 8.2 Commissioners were updated on the policy functions including upcoming submissions on:
- Mental Capacity Bill
  - Health and Social Care (Control of Data Processing) Bill
  - Environmental Better Regulation Bill
  - UNCRC parallel report
- 8.2 Commissioners were updated on the recent inaugural Business and Human Rights Forum. The forum will continue in September.

**Action: Commissioners to receive a presentation in August outlining the forum.**

- 8.3 Commissioners noted the absence figures for the month.

## **9. Legal Assistance requests**

- 9.1 Commissioners were briefed on assistance request HRC172.5.1.
- 9.2 Commissioners discussed the request and decided against granting assistance. Commissioners agreed that a letter to be sent outlining the decision and inform that the Commission will be seeking information on the broader issue mentioned and not the specific case.
- 9.3 Commissioners were briefed on assistance request HRC172.5.2.
- 9.4 Commissioners discussed the request and decided against granting legal assistance at this time. Commissioners agreed to keep a watching brief of the case.

## **10. Quarterly report against the Business the business plan**

- 10.1 Commissioners were given an update on the Quarterly report against the Business plan.
- 10.2 Commissioners discussed the layout of the report which now shows the budgets, nominal codes and budget spent to date.

**11. Decision making framework**

- 11.1 Commissioners noted the decision making framework.
- 11.2 Commissioners discussed the altered process at the Assembly in relation to consultations and the impact on Commission capacity and planning.
- 11.3 The Commissioners considered the decision making framework and agreed same.

**12. Any other Business**

- 12.1 Commissioners agreed that discussion was needed on the corporate summary page that accompanies each paper brought to the Commission.
- 12.2 The informal note of the Joint Commission meeting with the IHREC to be shared.

**Action: Note to be emailed.**

