



**183rd COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY 22 AUGUST 2016 AT 10:00 am
IN THE OFFICE OF
THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Christine Collins
John Corey
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds

Apologies: Paul Yam
David Russell, Deputy Director

In Attendance: Virginia McVea, Director
Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Administration Manager
Gary Rafferty, IT Support, Equality Commission NI
(agenda item 7)
Claire Martin, Communications Worker (agenda
items 7 & 8)
Hannah Russell, Policy & Research Officer (agenda
item 9)
Fiona O'Connell, Researcher (agenda items 9 and
13)
Kellie Turtle, Education Worker (agenda item 11)
Neil Bodger, Chair of Audit & Risk Management
Committee (agenda item 12)
Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker (agenda
item 13)

1.0 Declarations of interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

2.0 Draft minutes of the 182nd Commission meeting (HRC183.1)

2.1 The draft minutes of the 182nd Commission meeting held on 27 June 2016 were agreed subject to minor amendments.

Action: Minutes of the 182nd Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website

3.0 Matters arising

3.1 Commissioners were advised that the joint meeting with the Equality Commission had been confirmed for Wednesday 12 October 2016. Commissioners were to be notified of time and venue for the meeting (paragraph 2.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to be notified of time and venue of meeting

3.2 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that he had made contact with the Secretary of State's private office with a view to arranging a meeting (paragraph 2.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.3 The Director reported that the Annual Report and Accounts for 2015/16 were laid in Parliament on 20 July 2016 (paragraph 5.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.4 The Director confirmed that she had met with the Chief Executive of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) and that they were moving through the arrangements for undertaking the joint secretariat initiative (paragraph 5.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.5 The Director confirmed that the risk register had been reviewed (paragraph 5.6 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.6 The Chief Commissioner reported that he had received an unsatisfactory reply from the Northern Ireland Executive Office in response to his letter regarding the recent lack of engagement at the UK examination on the sixth periodic report of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The letter assured the Commission that the issues raised were being considered. It was agreed the Chief Commissioner would provide a further response (paragraph 8.1.5 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Chief Commissioner to reply to the letter from the Northern Ireland Executive

3.7 The Director reported that the pilot human rights app which was being developed with students from the University of Ulster was almost complete (paragraph 8.2.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.8 The Director reported that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) had asked the Commission to send a representative to a conference which was held in Rio during the 2016 Olympic Games. There was potential for a project which the Commission could become involved in and a concept note was currently being drafted (paragraph 9.2.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.9 Commissioners were advised that a date for the community engagement in the Derry City and Strabane Council area should be confirmed soon. Plans were underway for community engagements in Newry and Mourne (November 2016); Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (January 2017); and Antrim and Newtownabbey (March 2017) (paragraph 10.1 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

3.10 A date for a presentation update on the Belfast Trust Project is to be arranged (paragraph 12.2 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Louise Neeson to be invited to present to September/October Commission meeting

3.11 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that the first litigant in person research advisory group meeting had taken place and that the observational part of the research is due to commence in September 2016 (paragraph 13.3

of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

4.0 Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC183.2)

4.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on meetings and events he had attended since the last meeting. These included:

- Meeting with Kris Hopkin, MP Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
- Speaking at a seminar organised by Foundation for Democracy and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association with Rob Fenn, Head of the Human Rights and Democracy Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in attendance
- Tom Elliott, MP
- Margaret Ritchie, MP
- Visit of Judith Robertson, Chief Commissioner of Scottish Human Rights Commission.

4.2 Commissioners were advised that the Response to Programme for Government consultation document had been finalised – Commissioner Reynolds advised that she had not received the final version.

Action: Commissioner Reynolds to be sent the final version

5.0 Commissioners' Reports

5.1 Commissioner Kerr reported that he was attending the 40th Anniversary event of Foyle Women's Aid.

5.2 Commissioner Collins reported that the Rare Disease Partnership were in the process of setting up a regional forum in the north west to include Derry/Londonderry, Strabane, Limavady and Donegal. They also hoped to set up a regional forum in Newry, Mourne and North Down.

6.0 Recording of Dissent in the Minutes (HRC183.3)

6.1 It was agreed at the Commission meeting on 27 June 2016 that the recording of dissent in the minutes would be discussed further. A paper on the recording of dissent on decisions taken within Commission minutes was discussed.

- 6.2 After discussion, it was agreed by the majority that the Commission would revert to the previous practice of recording of dissent with no reasons provided. Commissioner Collins dissented from this decision.
- 6.3 Commissioner Reynolds expressed concern that this approach was not in keeping with the Code of Governance in relation to the expressed minuting of dissent. After discussion it was agreed that Commissioner Reynolds should seek an independent interpretation in the Code of Governance of the recording of dissent in the minutes from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and report back to the Commission.

Action: Commissioner Reynolds to seek an independent interpretation of the recording of dissent in minutes from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

- 6.4 Commissioner Collins raised that a review of the Code of Governance and Standing Orders was overdue. It was agreed to table this issue at September's Commission meeting.

Action: The need for a review of the Code of Governance and Standing Orders to be placed on the agenda for the September Commission meeting

Claire Martin, Communications and Gary Rafferty, IT Support, Equality Commission NI joined the meeting

7.0 Finance report (HRC183.4) including presentation on going paperless

- 7.1 Gary Rafferty gave a short presentation to the Commissioners on the use of the Microsoft Surface as part of the Commission's commitment to going paperless and explained the process to be used for Commission papers. It was agreed that the paperless approach would be trialled in September by the Chief Commissioner and two other Commissioners before being rolled out to the full Commission in October. It was agreed that eye tests would be offered to Commissioners.

Action: The paperless approach to be trialled in September 2016 and implemented from October 2016; Commissioners to be offered eye tests.

Gary Rafferty left the meeting

7.2 The Finance and Administration Manager presented the finance report for July 2016 and answered a number of questions.

7.3 Commissioners outlined their content with the report.

8.0 Communications Report

8.1 The Communications Report was tabled.

8.2 The Communications Worker reported that a short video featuring St Louise's Comprehensive College was launched on International Youth Day and that the human rights information App was being launched during Fresher's Week in October 2016.

8.3 The use of Instagram was being further developed with the launch of an infographic series on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

8.4 Commissioner Long congratulated the Communications Worker on the design quality of the website and social media.

8.5 The Communications Worker confirmed she would check the Commission's minutes on the website and send the link to Commissioners.

Action: Communications Worker to send website link for minutes to Commissioners

Claire Martin left the meeting

Fiona O'Connell and Hannah Russell joined the meeting

9.0 Proposed Human Rights Investigation into Traveller Accommodation (HRC183.5)

9.1 Two papers were presented for consideration on the proposed human rights investigation into traveller accommodation – Terms of Reference for the Investigation; and Scope of the Traveller Accommodation Investigation.

9.2 Commissioners were asked to comment with a view to approving both documents and allowing the investigation to commence from September 2016.

9.3 A discussion on the investigation documents took place and both were agreed subject to amendments.

Action: Terms of Reference and Scope of the Traveller Accommodation Investigation to be amended as discussed

Fiona O'Connell and Hannah Russell left the meeting

10.0 Human Rights Inquiry (HRC183.6)

10.1 The Chief Commissioner reported that he had spoken with Dr Emma Stone, Director of Policy and Research, Joseph Rowntree Foundation regarding potential funding for a future human rights inquiry. It was agreed that a concept note would be drafted for consideration and that time should be set aside for a detailed discussion at a separate meeting in early November.

Action: Date to be arranged in November to discuss and consider future human rights inquiry

Kellie Turtle, Education Worker joined the meeting

11.0 Concept note for programme mental health provision and suicide (HRC183.7)

11.1 The Education Worker reported that the idea for the project came from a desire of the Commission to look at mental health in a participative way with young people with the involvement of the Prince's Trust.

11.2 Commissioners discussed a concept note provided. Commissioners welcomed the initiative and it was agreed that the Education Worker should develop a Project Initiation Document to move forward the project.

Action: Education Worker to develop Project Initiation Document

Kellie Turtle left the meeting

Neil Bodger, Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee joined the meeting

12.0 Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee Report

- 12.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee reported that in line with the recommendations from the National Audit Office (NAO) an annual report on the discharge of the duties of the Audit and Risk Management Committee is to be made to the Commission Board.
- 12.2 The Chair presented a report covering the year 2015/16 and 2016/17 to date.
- 12.3 The report covered the following:
- Meetings that took place
 - Membership and attendance at meetings
 - Terms of Reference
 - Internal Audit
 - Risk Management
 - Financial Management
 - Policy Development
 - Propriety
 - Training and Development
- 12.4 The Chair confirmed that the Committee had discharged its remit properly and fully during the year 2015/16 and was currently working effectively. He thanked the Committee members and staff for their input over the past year.
- 12.5 The Chair was thanked for providing a comprehensive report on the work of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Neil Bodger left the meeting

Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker and Fiona O'Connell, Researcher joined the meeting

13.0 Access to publicly funded fertility treatment in Northern Ireland (HRC183.8)

- 13.1 The Assistant Caseworker and Researcher briefed the Commission on concerns that arise in relation to access to publically funded fertility treatment in certain circumstances, including those in same sex relationships and those with particular health conditions. The NICE

guidance and the relevant human rights standards were set out in detail.

Marion Reynolds left the meeting

13.2 Commissioners agreed to the recommendation that further information would be sought from the Department of Health in order to be able to conduct an assessment as to whether there had been a breach of rights in relation to access to publically funded fertility treatment.

Action: Further information to be sought from the Department of Health

Rhyannon Blythe and Fiona O'Connell left the meeting

14.0 Relationship with the EU (HRC183.9)

14.1 A discussion took place on the human rights issues potentially arising as a result of the recent European Union referendum decision.

14.2 It was agreed that a mapping exercise of what universities are doing should be undertaken with a view to examining what role the Commission would play going forward.

Action: Mapping exercise to be undertaken followed by series of engagements

15.0 Any other business

15.1 The Commission for Victims and Survivors has signalled she wishes to meet towards the end of October.

Action: Chief Commissioner to follow this up

The meeting closed at 4.00pm.