



**25 November 2019**

**218<sup>th</sup> COMMISSION MEETING  
IN THE OFFICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE  
COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1  
1NA**

**Present:** Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner  
Helen Ferguson  
Paul Mageean  
John McCallister  
Eddie Rooney  
Graham Shields  
Helena Macormac

**In attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Hannah Russell, Director (Legal, Research and  
Investigations, and Advice to Government)  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and  
Corporate Affairs) (Agenda items 1-7)  
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information  
and Education, Public and Political Affairs) (Agenda  
items 7-12)  
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant (Agenda items 8-12)  
Sara Donnelly-Clegg, Senior Legal and Research Officer  
(Agenda item 8)

## 1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Julia Stella, Boardroom Apprentice.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

## 2. Minutes of the 217th Commission meeting

- 2.1 The Minutes of the 217<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting held on 28 October 2019 were agreed as an accurate record subject to a minor amendment.

### **Action: 217<sup>th</sup> Commission minutes to be uploaded to Commission website**

- 2.2 It was noted that the formal letter confirming the extension to the appointment of the Chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee would be issued at the start of the new financial year (item 2.3 of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.3 It was noted that the appointment of Commissioner Mageean as Interim Chair from April to September 2020 would not be confirmed until formal sign-off by the Secretary of State (item 2.5 of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.4 It was noted that the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) were still seeking a venue for the joint event to mark both Commissions 20<sup>th</sup> anniversaries (item 3.3 of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.5 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) confirmed that the risk register had been updated to reflect the change in risk status for the legal budget (item 6.2 of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.6 The Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government) confirmed that proofs of the final version of the Annual Statement had been received from the printers,

and everything was on target to be completed and ready for the launch on 17 December 2019 (item 7.3 of the previous meeting refers).

### **3. Chief Commissioner's Report**

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

- Attendance at launch of NI Policing Board consultation on policing plan and public survey results
- Presbyterian Church Book launch of Considering Grace – the Role of Presbyterians during the Troubles
- Meeting of Litigant in Person Reference Group on role of McKenzie Friends
- Inaugural workshop of QUB School of Management/NIHRC Business and Human Rights Forum accredited module on Business and Human Rights
- Meeting with CAJ
- Presentation to the Northern Ireland Office Board
- Attendance at the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions General Assembly in Brussels
- Attendance at the Stephen Livingstone Annual Lecture: The Problem with Human Rights – Brice Dickson
- Attendance at the Law Society Immigration Committee Conference

3.2 The Chief Commission also reported on upcoming meetings and events that he would be attending. These included:

- Joint meeting of ECNI/NIHRC
- Meeting with Department of Health/Department of Justice re review of regional juvenile justice facilities

## 4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner Mageean provided an update on the Roundtable on the PSNI draft biometric policy, which was very well attended.
- 4.2 Commissioner Macormac reported on the launch of the Commission's Cumulative Impact Research Report. It was agreed that the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) would arrange for the Researcher's presentation to be circulated to Commissioners.

### **Action: Researcher's presentation to be circulated to Commissioners**

- 4.3 The Commission was invited by a group of 2<sup>nd</sup> year fine art students from the Ulster University to open an art exhibition of their work entitled 'Citizens'. Commissioner Rooney spoke at the event on behalf of the Commission.
- 4.4 Commissioner McCallister provided an update on the recent Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland (IMNI) meeting.

## 5. Chief Executive's Report

- 5.1 It was noted that the Chief Executive provided a pre-record of his presentation to the Sporting Chance Forum in Geneva, as he had been unable to attend.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive provided an update on the premises move. It was noted that following a request by the National Property Controls department (NPC) of the Cabinet Office, an agent had been appointed to provide assurances on negotiations regarding the lease etc. The letter of assurance has been forwarded to the NPC and the Commission is awaiting the outcome.
- 5.3 It was noted that the Commission still had not received formal notification of its budget for 2019/20 and had been unable to publish its Business Plan on the Commission's website.

5.4 It was agreed that the issue was to be raised at the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting on 12 December 2019.

**Action: Budget and Business Plan for 2019/20 to be discussed at the Audit and Risk Management Committee**

5.5 Commissioners noted that the Business Planning process for 2020/21 is due to commence in December 2019 with an initial meeting planned with staff on 28 November 2019. It was agreed to add Business Planning to the agenda for the December 2019 Commission meeting.

**Action: Business Planning 2020/21 to be agenda item at the December 2019 Commission meeting**

5.6 It was noted that a number of emails had been received from the same recipient under Freedom of Information requesting the same information as previously provided. The issue is to be discussed further at the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting in December 2019.

**Action: To be discussed at the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting in December 2019.**

## **6. Finance Report**

6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the financial report for October 2019.

6.2 It was noted that the Commission had not received a formal response to its bid for additional funding in the November Monitoring Round, as well as formal notification of its allocated budget for 2019/20.

**Action: Director (finance, personnel and corporate affairs) to seek confirmation of the outcome of the bid.**

6.3 Commissioners discussed the budget implications and in particular the legal budget.

## 7. External review and other issues

7.1 Commissioners discussed the revised NIO working document on the review of NIHRC and confirmed that subject to some suggested minor amendments that they were broadly content with the changes that had been made.

7.2 It was agreed that the Chief Executive would discuss the suggested amendments with the NIO.

**Action: Chief Executive to discuss suggested amendments with the NIO**

7.3 The Chief Executive updated Commissioners on staff capacity within the legal and research team due to vacant posts and provided details of proposed processes to help alleviate the situation. Commissioners were content with the proposals and asked to be kept informed of outcomes.

**Action: Chief Executive to keep Commissioners updated on staff capacity issues.**

## 8. Legal Process review

8.1 Commissioners considered a revised Legal Process review policy and approved the document.

8.2 Commissioners were provided with an update on the ongoing legal cases including the court hearing into the Máiría Cahill case regarding the requirement of candidates to publish their home address to stand for local council/EU elections which has been adjourned until February 2020.

## 9. Joint Committee research update

9.1 Commissioners were updated on the Joint Committee research into birthright and citizenship after Brexit.

9.2 Commissioners were also updated on the roundtable to discuss the birthright legal analysis that took place in London

on 20 November which was attended by the NIO and Home Office officials.

## **10. Communications Report**

10.1 Commissioners were updated on the Communications report which included reporting on education visits to schools, Commission's involvement in the Human Rights Festival and the security update to the Commissions website.

10.2 Commissioners noted the digital communications report and the press clippings.

## **11. Educational Material**

11.1 Commissioners were briefed on the background to the educational material – lesson ideas, which have been drafted in conjunction with a teacher and a human rights educator. The Commissioners were also updated on the engagement with CCEA to date and the plan for distribution after publication.

11.2 Commissioners welcomed the lesson ideas and materials and approved the lesson ideas in principle subject to minor amendments.

## **12. Any other business**

12.1 There was nothing to report.

The meeting closed at 2:10pm.