

28 March 2022

244th COMMISSION MEETING

Held in the Commission's Offices, Alfred House, 19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED and via Teams

Present: Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner
Helen Henderson
Jonathan Kearney (agenda items 1-8)
David A Lavery CB
Eddie Rooney
Stephen White

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Rebecca Magee, Executive Assistant (to Chief
Commissioner and Chief Executive)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and
Corporate Affairs)
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal, Research and
Investigations, and Advice to Government)
Éilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU
Withdrawal)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and
Communications)
Laura Banks, Solicitor (agenda item 9)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Margie McKay, Boardroom Apprentice.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interests.

2. Minutes of the 243rd Commission meeting

2.1 The minutes of the 243rd Commission meeting held on 28 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record following a minor amendment.

Action: Minutes of the 243rd Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website.

3. Chief Commissioner's report

3.1 The Chief Commissioner's report was noted.

4. Commissioners' Reports

4.1 Commissioner Henderson reported on the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat St. Patricks day reception that she attended with Commissioners Rooney and White.

4.2 Commissioner Rooney reported on the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting that took place on 14 March 2022.

5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on recruitment with two Policy & Research posts currently being recruited for. A recruitment exercise will begin shortly for the post of Senior Finance & Human Resources Officer.

5.2 The Chief Executive raised a request from ENNHRI for a donation to a Ukraine Solidarity Fund. Commissioners discussed this in-depth, and agreed that although this is a worthy cause, the Commission is unable to donate due to the time constraints on raising a business case with the NIO in order to do so.

5.3 The Chief Executive provided an update on the funding for the secretariat for the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. He attended a meeting with the Equality

and Human Rights Commission and the Rwandan Commission to discuss how the secretariat would run if the funding bid is successful.

- 5.4 The Chief Executive updated Commissioners on meetings he has attended since the last board meeting, this included an update on the Faith Groups Roundtable which is co-hosted with ECNI and NI Water on Procurement training.
- 5.5 The Chief Executive reiterated the need for an Independent Review of the Commission. Following the review, a discussion is needed on the Education function.

Action: Education function to be discussed following an Independent Review.

6. Finance Report including Cash Flow Report

- 6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the finance reports for core and the dedicated mechanism expenditure for February 2022.
- 6.2 Commissioners noted that based on current projections there was an anticipated underspend in core. Commissioners acknowledge the reason for this underspend at 6% which is higher the NIO underspend allowance of 2%.
- 6.3 There was also an anticipated underspend in dedicated mechanism due to being unable to fill a vacant post.
- 6.4 The Cash Flow Report for February 2022 was noted.

7. Draft Business Plan and Strategic Plan

- 7.1 Commissioners approved the Business Plan for 2022-2023.
- 7.2 Commissioners approved the Strategic Plan for 2022-2025.

8. Legal Functions Report

- 8.1 The Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice

to Government) provided an update on:

- NM (Access to MOD pension): the hearing was part heard in February with the second part to be heard on 11 April.
- RV (Data extraction of mobile phone data): hearing pushed back to May 2022.
- JR123 (Rehabilitation of Offenders): still ongoing with hearing pushed back to 28 May.
- RSE: awaiting pre-action letters.
- SPUC (Challenge on Abortion Regulations 2021): possible meeting will be required before the next board meeting to discuss options going forward.

9. Legal Application

9.1 The Solicitor presented the Legal Application – NIHE selection scheme, most particularly the issue of intimidation points, whereby additional housing points are offered to people who are victims of intimidation, enabling them to be rehoused.

9.2 Commissioners discussed the application and authorised that pre action letters to be sent to the NIHE and copied to the Department for Communities as a notice party.

9.3 Commissioners agreed that Senior Counsel can be appointed.

10. Dedicated Mechanism update

10.1 The Director (Human Rights after EU Withdrawal) updated Commissioners on the work of the Dedicated Mechanism since the last meeting. These included:

- Meeting with Rapporteur on Inquiry into Human Rights on the island of Ireland after Brexit, Council of Europe Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
- Three Commission cross-border stakeholder event in L'Derry on 'Rights after Brexit: Minority ethnic groups, migrant people and border communities'
- Jointly with ECNI, briefed written and oral briefing peers on Elections Bill: met Lord Jay, Baroness Ritchie, Lord Wallace.

11. Engagement and Communications Report

11.1 The Director (Engagement and Communications) presented an update on the work of the Engagement and Communications team since the last meeting including press releases, social media statistics, and on the meetings of the Sports and Human Rights Forum and Business and Human Rights Forum.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Commissioners discussed former Commissioner, Professor Colin Harvey. Commissioners agreed to a re-tweet of the four UN Special Rapporteurs statement condemning a "smear campaign" against Professor Harvey. Commissioners also discussed how they would show support to Professor Harvey.

Action: Plan to support Professor Harvey to be shared.

12.2 The Chief Commissioner raised a concern around the Joint Committee of the NI Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). Commissioners reiterated the need for the separate Joint Committee of the NIHRC and IHREC and have agreed with the Chief Commissioners proposal to write to the Chief Commissioner of IHREC reiterating the importance of such a meeting.

Action: Chief Commissioner to write to Chief Commissioner of IHREC re: Joint Committee.

13. Induction refresher session on Policy Work

13.1 Commissioners received a refresher session on how policy work is decided upon and completed within the Commission.

The meeting closed at 13:15pm.