



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

**167th COMMISSION MEETING ON MONDAY 26TH JANUARY
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, Chief Commissioner
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds
Christine Collins
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Paul Yam

Present: Virginia McVea, Director
David Russell, Deputy Director
Claire Martin, Communications Worker

**Present for part
of meeting:** Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant
Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Personnel Manager
Roisin Devlin, Investigations Worker

Apologies: John Corey

1. Minutes of the 166th Commission meeting

- 1.1 The minutes were approved following the below amendments:
- 2.3.2: 8.6 remove last 'of'
8.5 remove 'of the standards'

- 5.1 Insert – ‘and any financial implications for the timings of this piece of work after the Human Rights Inquiry’.
- 10. Business plan update – change title to Business Plan 2015-16
- 9.3 remove ‘the’.
- 11. Insert – ‘this letter will take account of Stormont House agreement and will be sent to commissioners for agreement before it is sent’.
- 12. Amend title to- ‘Update in relation to Business Plan Pillar two: Action 1 in year target on producing a research paper analysing human rights standards and issues of public policy related to conflict’.

2. Matters arising

- 2.1 Commissioners were updated on the court hearing and the request of leave in relation to Termination of Pregnancy in cases of rape and incest and where there is a serious foetal malformation (item 6.2 of the previous minutes refers).
- 2.2 Commissioners were updated on the upcoming Community Engagement day to take place in Carrickfergus on 28 January (item 6.4 of the previous minutes refers).

3. Chief Commissioner report

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on his recent meetings, these included:
- Tom McGonigle, Prisoner Ombudsman
 - Jonathan Bell MLA and Jennifer McCann, Junior Ministers OFMDFM
 - Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
 - Amnesty International
 - David Anderson QC, Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation
 - John O’Dowd MLA, Minister for Education
 - Mark Durkan MLA, Minister for the Environment
 - David Ford MLA, Minister for Justice

- Sir Declan Morgan, Lord Chief Justice
- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner also reported on:
- The launch of the Commission's Carers and Human Rights report.
 - The launch of the Commission's Annual Statement.
 - Atlantic Philanthropies human rights grantees conference – speech on why accountability is important in human rights.
 - Opening of the Human Rights Festival poetry event sponsored by the Commission.
 - Evidence session with the Justice Committee on the Jim Wells' amendment to the Justice Bill.
 - Attendance at the UN Special Rapporteur Kishore Singh's lecture on the Right to Education at Queens University.
 - Attendance at the Stephen Livingstone annual memorial lecture.
 - Meeting with the Department of Foreign Affairs – NGO standing committee on human rights.

4. Commissioner Report

- 4.1 Commissioner Milton Kerr reported on his attendance at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat event on 22 January.

5. Director's Report

- 5.1 Commissioners discussed the Director's Report.
- 5.2 The Director reported that the NIO had approved the recent business case regarding the new lease.
- 5.3 The Director reported on upcoming training she will be delivering in Vienna with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman on the Human Rights Manual for the work of Ombudsman.
- 5.4 The Director reported on training she has given to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland on a human rights based approach to their work.
- 5.5 Commissioners discussed the Commonwealth Forum Chair and the funds needed to fulfil the position. There

was agreement that this would be a good opportunity for the Commission if funding is forthcoming.

- 5.6 The Finance and Administration Manager reported the finance report and an issue of an outside attempted credit card fraud. This has been reported to the NIO as our sponsor department and will be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 5.7 The Director reported on the recruitment of a Researcher at SO (Permanent) and an Assistant Researcher at EO1 (Temporary).

6. Business Plan update

- 6.1 Commissioners agreed that as this was the first opportunity to look at the Business plan that it would be discussed in more detail at the Commissioner away day and it would be signed off at the February meeting. The broad thrust of the document was agreed subject to a number of amendments.

Action: Business Plan to come to the February meeting.

7. Commissioner's two day planning meeting

- 7.1 Commissioners discussed the subjects they wish to discuss at the planning meeting in February. They are:
- How we work as Commissioners
 - Long term strategic goals
 - Outstanding business plan issues
 - The way forward
 - Any other business
- 7.2 Commissioners were asked to return the questionnaire directly to Ms Noonan.
- 7.3 Commissioners were updated on the venue for the planning meeting.

8. Human Rights Inquiry Chapters – Introduction and Quality

- 8.1 Commissioners discussed the Introduction to the Human Rights Inquiry. A number of substantive points were made including the need for more case studies, using a broader range of waiting time statistics, further detail on the findings on nursing home transfers to emergency departments and a look at further detail on comparison of thrust policies if possible.
- 8.2 Commissioners discussed the Quality chapter to the Human Rights Inquiry.
- 8.3 Commissioners agreed that following discussion the chapter on quality would be amended and copied to the Commissioners. The introduction chapter would be amended once other chapters are completed.

Action: Amended chapters to be emailed to Commissioners.

Action: Next chapters to go on March agenda.

9. Legal Assistance Request

- 9.1 Commissioners received a briefing on a request for legal assistance (HRC167.5).
- 9.2 Commissioners discussed the detail of the request.
- 9.3 Commissioners agreed by majority that the request for assistance would not be granted. The Commissioners also agreed that a meeting would be sought with the Director of Public Prosecution Service. Commissioner Marion Reynolds dissented from the decision to not grant legal assistance.

10. Bill of Rights

- 10.1 Commissioners noted with disappointment the reference in the Stormont House Agreement that there is not at present consensus on a Bill of Rights and also the update from Commissioner John Corey on work to advance the Commission's action plan on the issue.

11. Any other business

11.1 Commissioners were updated on the new timescale for the consultation process which has moved from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. Commissioners agreed to discuss the implications of this further.

11.2 The agenda for the community engagement event to Carrickfergus was shared with Commissioners.