



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

**170th COMMISSION MEETING ON MONDAY 27 APRIL 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
John Corey
Marion Reynolds
Alan McBride
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Paul Yam

Present: Virginia McVea, Director
David Russell, Deputy Director
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant

**Present for part
of meeting:** Claire Martin, Communications Worker
Angela Stevens, Caseworker
Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker

Apologies: Christine Collins
Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Personnel Manager

1. Minutes of the 169th Commission meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the 169th Commission meeting we agreed following the amendments:
 - 3.2 'Convention' replaced with 'Committee'
 - 4.1 insert '...as part of the pre agreed approach decided at the Commissioner retreat'

8.3 The recording of the reasons for dissent in minutes was discussed. The current position was reconfirmed namely that concise reasons for dissent would be given in line with the recording of decisions rather than full discussion on items.

Action: Chief Commissioner to agree a minute on item 8.3 in line with this agreed approach.

11.2 delete 'the'

2. Matters arising

- 2.1 Commissioners were updated on the application for external funding for a joint project with Ulster University to look at issues around unrepresented litigants (item 2.1 of the previous minutes refers).
- 2.2 Commissioners were informed that the Business Plan for 2015-2016 is now on the Commissions website (item 6 of the previous minutes refers).
- 2.3 Commissioners were updated on the Human Rights Inquiry into Emergency Healthcare. It was noted that the report was at the factual accuracy stage. Planning for the launch is underway. The launch date for the report is 27 May and is likely to be launched from the Commission premises (item 7 of the previous minutes refers).
- 2.4 Our stakeholder mailing list to be circulated is outstanding and will be shared as soon as possible (item 9.2 of the previous minutes refers).

3. Chief Commissioner Report

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on his recent meetings and events. These included:
 - Sue McAllister, head of NI Prison Service
 - Tom Frawley and Marie Anderson, NI Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman
 - Attended the Department of Foreign Affairs – Human Rights Units stakeholder roundtable

- Speaker at the Community Relations Council event reviewing OFMDFM Racial Equality Strategy
- Meeting with the Department of Justice on progress re: the Stormont House Agreement
- Alan Hunter, Chief Executive of Law Society
- Alan Whysall NIO

Action: A letter to be sent acknowledging Alan Whysal's retirement.

- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner also reported on the upcoming Commissioner appraisals and stated his intention to have these and a skills assessment completed by mid-June.
- 3.3 The Chief Commissioner updated Commissioners on the First Annual Human Rights Lecture to be held in June. Navi Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is confirmed as the speaker.
- 3.4 The Chief Commissioner updated Commissioners on the key note speaker invitation to Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for the Annual Statement launch on 10 December.

4. Commissioner update report

- 4.1 Commissioner Paul Yam updated the Commission on his recent attendance at the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-Equinet Platform on Hate crime: A meeting between FRA, the Council of Europe, Equality Bodies, National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudsperson institutions in Riga, Latvia on 30 and 31 March.

Action: Commissioner Yam to provide a short written report on the event for the May Commission meeting and to provide the papers from the event. Commissioner Yam to meet with staff to discuss

the event in line with the Business Plan objective for a roundtable on Hate Crime.

- 4.2 Commissioner Alan McBride reported on his attendance at the Human Rights Consortium AGM. He also asked about the Commission having a role in the Consortium's human rights festival later this year.
- 4.3 Commissioners agreed a substantive item on 'environment scanning' would be on the agenda on a quarterly basis beginning in May.

Action: Environment Scanning to be on May Commission meeting agenda.

5. NHRI Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Commissioners were provided with a background on NHRI Impact Assessment including the OHCHR report on 'Assessing the Effectiveness of NHRIs'.
- 5.2 The Director discussed how ideas for a proposal on a new record of impact would record international and national impact which would link directly with the recording of information for the Annual Statement and UPR submissions.
- 5.3 The proposed approach was agreed in principle and a proposal for assessing impact within the Commission would be presented at the June Commission meeting.

Action: Impact Assessment proposal on June Commission meeting agenda.

6. Review of the Annual Statement – initial discussion

- 6.1 Commissioners were given a briefing on a project initiation document which has been drafted detailing how recording for the Annual Statement works currently and linking with the proposed new Impact Assessment record (item 5 above) to improve and enhance the current method of collating useable data and recording impact.
- 6.2 Commissioners reviewed and discussed the publication of the Annual Statement report. The Commissioners were broadly content with the value of the statement and suggested looking further at how its impact on government departments and public authorities can be enhanced. It was noted that a draft should be with the board in October.
- 6.2 Commissioners discussed the launch date of the Annual Statement on 10 December 2015 and that for now the statement should continue to be launched in early December.

7. Statutory Functions Report

- 7.1 Commissioners were updated on the Communications function. This included an in-depth analysis of social media users on the Commissions Facebook and Twitter pages.
- 7.2 Commissioners discussed the current position of Policy submissions under the Policy function.

Action: Deputy Director to ensure differentiation of marking for consultations with watching brief with those being responded to highlighted.

- 7.3 Commissioners discussed community engagement. It was agreed that a local visit would be arranged for June and that a proposal for the new community engagement schedule would be presented in May.

Action: Deputy Director to provide a proposal for new community engagement schedule to be on May Commission meeting agenda.

- 7.4 Commissioners noted the Finance report. Commissioners agreed to an extra meeting in late June/early July to sign off on the Accounts for 2014.

Action: Finance and Administration Manager is to arrange a date for extra meeting.

- 7.5 Commissioners discussed the legal functions paper. Commissioners were updated on ongoing legal files. One longstanding case was raised by Commissioner Reynolds and it was agreed to check the current position in more detail.

8. Legal Assistance requests

- 8.1 Commissioners were briefed on assistance request HRC170.6.1.
- 8.2 Commissioner discussed the request and decided to not grant assistance on an individual basis but to raise concerns with the Judicial Studies Board.
- 8.3 Commissioners were briefed on assistance request HRC170.6.2.
- 8.4 Commissioners discussed the request and agreed to write to relevant organisations asking for further information.

9. NIHRC Social Media Operational Guide

- 9.1 Commissioners were briefed on the Social Media Operational Guide. The guide sets out practical steps to strengthen the organisation's Facebook and Twitter

profiles and the best practices to maximise the impact of social media posts.

- 9.2 Commissioners discussed the use of social media and how Commissioners could help improve coverage by sharing event information with the Communications Worker.
- 9.3 Commissioners agreed to have a short session on how to use social media platforms.

Action: Communications lead to arrange training with Commissioner Long before July and to circulate date to Commissioners.

10. Bill of Rights

- 10.1 Commissioners noted any references to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland in each of the 2015 Election Manifestos for the Executive parties.
- 10.2 Commissioners noted that further engagement would begin again after the election.

11. Information papers

- 11.1 Framework Document – Commissioners noted the Framework document between the NIO and NIHRC. Two amendments were outlined to the Commissioners. Commissioners agreed the Framework document following the amendments.

Action: Final version to be an information paper for the May Commission meeting.

- 11.2 Response from Department re: Carers Report – Commissioners noted the response from the Department regarding the Carers report.

Commissioners agreed to share the correspondence with Carers NI.

Action: Chief Commissioner to share correspondence with Carers NI and respond to DHSSPS.

11.3 2011 Accreditation Application – Commissioners noted the 2011 Accreditation Application for information. Commissioners were presented with a background to accreditation. The Director advised on the process for accreditation at the Commission.

Action: Background document to be emailed to Commissioners.

12. Any other Business

12.1 Commissioners were updated on a request from ENNHRI on extra funding. Commissioners agreed that with the current budget the Commission was not in a position to offer further support.

12.2 Commissioners were updated on the renovation of the premises.

12.3 Commissioners were updated on the Commonwealth chair position and that without confirmation of external funding the Director was advising the Commonwealth Forum that the Commission was unable to take the position of Chair.