



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

**177th COMMISSION MEETING ON THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER
2015 AT 10:00am IN THE OFFICE OF THE NORTHERN
IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39
NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

In attendance: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Paul Yam
Christine Collins
John Corey
Milton Kerr
Alan McBride

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

**Present for Part
of meeting:** Lorraine Hamill, Finance & Administration Manager
Neil Bodger, Chair of Audit & Risk Committee

Apologies: Marion Reynolds
Grainia Long

1. Minutes of the 176th Commission meeting

1.1 Minutes of the 176th Commission meeting were agreed following minor amendments.

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Joint Commission meeting with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission will be held on 20

January 2016. The meeting with the Equality Commission will take place in early 2016. The Chief Commissioner and Director to meet their counterparts in advance of the meeting (item 2.7 of the previous minutes refers).

- 2.2 A progress report on the Commonwealth Forum chair role was provided. This included an update on website design and video shorts on a series of projects that the Commonwealth will be doing (item 9 of the previous minutes refers).
- 2.3 Commissioners commended staff on the success of the event to mark the launch of the Commission's Annual Statement for 2015 on 14 December (item 6 of the previous minutes refers).

3. Chief Commissioner Report

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on meetings and events he has attended since the last meeting. These included:
 - speech at the VOCAL conference on learning disability and having your say
 - meeting of the four UK and Ireland NHRIs
 - meeting Katherine Eden-Haig, Secretary General for the Commonwealth Lawyers Association
 - meeting Alistair Ross, Chair of the Justice Committee
 - introduction at Human Rights festival event 'Music of the People'
 - Chaired Business and Human Rights Forum
 - Meeting with UU, OLCJ and NICTS on progressing the Litigants in Person research project

4. Commissioner Report

- 4.1 Commissioner Corey reported on an event he attended on Human Rights, Good Practice and Public Procurement.
- 4.2 Commissioner McBride reported on an event he spoke at for the Human Rights Festival and also reported on a second session he held with Bytes Youth.

5. Director's Report

- 5.1 Commissioners considered the Director's report and were updated on recent training that was provided to PONI on a human rights based approach to complaints. The training was very well received and conversations are ongoing to engage on further training opportunities. Commissioners also discussed recent training provided to the Institute of Professional Legal Studies that the Commission is involved in every year.
- 5.2 Commissioners analysed the budget in light of recent staffing changes. Commissioners discussed an upcoming recruitment process. It was agreed that further consideration was needed before the recruitment could begin and a short paper would assist deliberations.

**Action: Paper on
workforce
management to
come to January
meeting.**

6. Quarterly Report against the Business Plan

- 6.1 Commissioners considered and noted that projects within the Quarterly Report against the Business Plan were largely completed or were on target to be completed by the end of the Business Plan cycle.

7. Finance Report

- 7.1 Commissioners were updated on the finance report.
- 7.2 Commissioners discussed in detail the current spend of the Commission.
- 7.3 Commissioners noted that spend is on target for the end of the third quarter.

8. Strategic Plan

- 8.1 Commissioners were updated on the current strategic planning process. The work included getting feedback from meetings with stakeholders, a survey placed on

the Commission's website and a report commissioned on awareness of the Commission by the general public.

- 8.2 Commissioners agreed that the half-day session that has been arranged for Commissioners to work on strategic planning should be increased to a full day.
- 8.3 Commissioners agreed that a strategic planning session between Commissioners and staff should be arranged subsequent to the Commissioners day. Papers for the day should go out in advance with the day being facilitated by Commissioner Long.

Action: Meeting to be arranged for Commissioners in early January and staff on strategic planning and papers to go out in advance of the Commissioner day.

9. Update on Termination of Pregnancy case

- 9.1 Commissioners were provided an update on the Termination of Pregnancy case including the timescale for any appeal from the Department.
- 9.2 Commissioners agreed that if needed an extra meeting would be arranged for further discussion.

10. Kigali Declaration

- 10.1 Commissioners were provided with the background to the Kigali Declaration on child, early and forced marriage agreed in 2015 by members of the Commonwealth National Human Rights Forum. The Chief Commissioner outlined that the Kigali Declaration is part of the Commonwealth Forum work that will be taken forward by the Commission. The Commissioners agreed to endorse the Kigali Declaration.

11. Report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee Chair

- 11.1 Commissioners welcomed Mr Neil Bodger, Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to the meeting.

- 11.2 Mr Bodger outlined that the National Audit Office (NAO) recommends that audit committees review their operation and effectiveness each year, and make an annual report to the Board on the discharge of their duties.
- 11.3 Mr Bodger presented the report. He reported that the audits carried out in 2014-15 by the Internal Auditor had given a satisfactory assurance rating in relation to Budgetary Control and Management Information; and Corporate Governance and Risk Management.
- 11.4 Mr Bodger presented the findings of the audits carried out in 2015-16 on Communications; Legal Services; and IT, Information Security and Business Continuity Planning. The Internal Auditors had given a satisfactory assurance rating in relation to Communications and IT, Information Security and Business Continuity. The Internal Auditors has also given a substantial assurance rating in relation to Legal Services. Following questions, Mr Bodger set out that he was satisfied with the internal audit arrangements applied by the Commission.

12. Any other Business

- 12.1 Nothing to report.