



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Minutes of the 180th Commission Meeting

Held at 10.00 am on Monday 25 April 2016

**In the office of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission,
Temple Court, 39 North Street, Belfast, BT1 1NA**

Present: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Christine Collins
John Corey
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds
Paul Yam

In Attendance: Virginia McVea, Director
Lorraine Hamill, Finance and Administration Manager
Colin Caughey, Policy Worker
Rhyannon Blythe, Legal Caseworker (agenda item 9)
Claire Martin, Communications Worker (agenda item 11)
Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant (agenda item 11)

1. Minutes of the 179th Commission Meeting held on 29 February 2016 (HRC180.1)

1.1 The minutes of the 179th Commission Meeting held on Monday 29 February 2016 were agreed subject to amending item 9 on UN DDR which would be left to the Chief Commissioner and Commissioner Reynolds to agree and would be brought to the Commission meeting in May 2016 for final approval.

Action: 179th Commission Minutes to be brought to the May Commission meeting for final approval.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 The paper on FGM was an agenda item (paragraph 2.2 of the

previous minutes refers).

2.2 Further information on the database was detailed in the Director's Report (paragraph 5.2 of the previous minutes refers).

2.3 The Joint Meeting with the Equality Commission has been provisionally arranged for Monday 11 May 2016. The Equality Commission has to confirm (paragraph 5.4 of the previous minutes refers).

3. Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC180.2)

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

- Meeting three person panel on ending paramilitarism
- Meeting with Brian Gormally, CAJ
- Global Alliance of National Human Rights General Assembly including chairing Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs meeting
- Meeting with Chief Commissioner and CEO of NICCY

3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on forthcoming engagements which included:

- The joint meeting with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- Re-accreditation to assess retention of 'A' status

3.3 It was agreed that the Chief Commissioner would include reference to key submissions which had been agreed by Commissioners between meetings.

4. Commissioners' Reports (oral item)

4.1 Commissioner Long reported on the Anti-Poverty Strategy Panel meeting that she had been invited to speak at.

4.2 Commissioner McBride had spoken at a Human Rights and Culture event.

4.3 Commissioner Long also spoke, in a personal capacity, at an event hosted by the Simon Community which followed the sudden deaths of homeless people.

5. Oral Item on UN DDR Paper

5.1 Commissioners Collins and Reynolds outlined their separate concerns about the process adopted to agree the publication of the Guide for members of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions utilising the UN Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) Standards and the EU Transitional Justice framework. Commissioner Collins' concerns were that the Guide had not been produced in accordance with the agreed programme plan for the Commonwealth Forum. She also expressed concerns of a governance nature related to its production. The Guide was in her view incomplete as it lacked any mention of international humanitarian law; focused exclusively on post-conflict societies thereby undermining the holistic approach integral to the DDR Standards and the EU Transitional Justice framework. No account had been taken of either her written or previous verbal comments to this effect in finalising the Guide. Accordingly she recorded her dissent from the production of the Guide. Commissioner Reynolds concerns were that the original intention had been to produce an internal briefing paper for Commissioners' use. A compromise was reached to produce a Guide for the Commonwealth Forum with an outward focus, subject to Commissioners being facilitated to produce a minority report on any document which sought to apply UN DDR Standards to Northern Ireland. Commissioner Reynolds noted that the UN DDR Standards were an integrated, holistic system with eligibility criteria to gain entry to the processes. The Guide, however, focuses on the post-conflict elements of the Standards implying that all post-conflict societies are, by that fact, eligible for inclusion in a DDR process. This creates the confusion that the DDR Standards could be retrospectively applied in a post-conflict society which was not part of the total process and which had not previously been found eligible for entry to a DDR process. The Chief Commissioner and other Commissioners did not share these analyses or concerns. During the discussion the question of finalising Commission documents by email was raised. It was agreed this would be considered at a forthcoming Commission reflection meeting.

Action: The general process on drafting documents would be considered at the forthcoming Commissioners' reflection meeting.

6. Quarterly Report on the Business Plan 2015-16 (HRC180.3)

6.1 The Director updated Commissioners on the final quarterly report against the Business Plan 2015/16.

7. Director's Report (HRC180.4)

7.1 Commissioners noted the Director's Report.

7.2 The Director updated Commissioners on the forthcoming joint conference with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

7.3 Commissioners were updated on the Commission's Risk Register.

8. Finance Report (HRC180.5)

8.1 Commissioners were updated on expenditure against budget for the year ended 31 March 2016

8.2 It was noted that the final expenditure was subject to change as the annual accounts for the financial year 2015/16 were still being drafted.

8.3 The final accounts for 2015/16 would be presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting for final sign-off prior to laying in Parliament in July 2016.

Rhyannon Blythe, Legal Caseworker joined the meeting at 1.10pm

9. Statutory Functions Report (HRC180.6)

9.1 The Legal Caseworker provided a paper and updated Commissioners on the legal functions report.

Rhyannon Blythe left the meeting at 1.45pm

9.2 Colin Caughey updated Commissioners on the report on Advice to Government, including recent submissions to the UNCRC and ICESCR monitoring treaty bodies. It was agreed that future reports would be colour coded to show new content.

Action: Advice to Government report to be colour coded for new content

9.3 Commissioners were updated on responses/submissions on

treaties and international work.

- 9.4 A new database has been set up to track updates and changes. It is hoped that the new database will be presented to the May Commission meeting.

10. Human Rights Inquiry (HRC180.7)

- 10.1 Commissioners discussed scoping options for a potential human rights inquiry, namely working age poverty, mental health and housing need and homelessness. It was agreed that staff would produce a scoping paper on three key issues and that Commissioners would meet again to have further discussion.

Action: Date to be arranged for meeting of Commissioners to discuss further

Claire Martin, Communications Worker and Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant joined the meeting at 2.40pm.

11. Communications Report and Instagram Report to include film presentation (HRC180.8)

- 11.1 Commissioners noted the Communications Report and Instagram Report.
- 11.2 Commissioners were shown the new films that had been recently produced:

Homelessness in partnership with the Simon Community
Participation in Society in partnership with Barnardos, Haptik, Andy Allen MP, Michael McKillop and Andrea Begley
Migrant Workers in partnership with Migrant NI and the Law Centre
Everyday Rights in your Community in partnership with Carers NI, Women's Aid and St Louise Comprehensive College.

- 11.3 The films would be launched at an event in The Mac on 9 June 2016.

Claire Martin and Zara Porter left the meeting at 3.10pm.

12. Investigatory Powers Bill (HRC180.9)

- 12.1 It was agreed that comments on the Investigatory Powers Bill should be emailed to the Chief Commissioner for consideration by the end of the week.

Action: Comments to the Chief Commissioner by Friday 29 April 2016

13. Briefing Paper: United Kingdom (UK) Referendum on Membership of the European Union (EU) (HRC180.10)

13.1 It was agreed that comments on the briefing paper would be emailed to the Chief Commissioner for consideration by the end of the week.

Action: Comments to the Chief Commissioner by Friday 29 April 2016

14. Update on Community Engagement (HRC180.11)

14.1 Commissioners considered the paper on community engagement.

14.2 It was agreed that the Director would produce a further paper detailing where the community engagements would take place over the next year and possible dates for consideration.

Action: Director to produce paper on proposed locations and possible dates

15. Commonwealth Forum National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) Update (HRC180.12)

15.1 The Chief Commissioner reported that the Indian Commission were keen to host a Business and Human Rights Forum and would report back on progress to the June Commission meeting.

Action: Update on hosting of a Business and Human Rights Forum by the Indian Commission to be agenda item for June Commission meeting

16. Any Other Business

16.1 It was agreed that the Corporate Plan and Corporate Calendar would be emailed to Commissioners.

Action: Corporate Plan and Corporate Calendar to be emailed

17. Date of next meeting

17.1 The next Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday 31 May 2016 at 10.00 am.