



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE 94TH COMMISSION MEETING

**HELD ON MONDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2007 AT 10:00am AT
THE CANAL COURT HOTEL, MERCHANTS QUAY, NEWRY BT35 8HF**

Present: Monica McWilliams, Chief Commissioner
Jonathan Bell
Tom Duncan
Christine Eames
Colin Harvey
Alan Henry
Ann Hope
Eamonn O'Neill

Apologies: Kevin McLaughlin
Geraldine Rice

In attendance: Peter O'Neill, Head of Information, Education and
Development
Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Head of Legal Services, Policy and
Research
Maureen Murray, Administrative Officer
(Commissioners)

1. Minutes of the last meetings (HRC 94.1(a) and (b))

- 1.1 The minutes of the 93rd Commission meeting held on 16 July 2007, and a special Commission meeting held on 24 August 2007 to approve proposed changes to vacant staff posts, were agreed as accurate records.

2. Matters arising

2.1 There were no matters arising.

3. Report from the Chief Commissioner (HRC 94.2)

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on her meeting with Jim Auld, Director of CRJ Ireland on 22 August 2007. It was noted that there are concerns that, despite protocols and inspections having been agreed for Community Based Restorative Justice projects, there may now be insufficient funds for these programmes.
- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner reported on her meeting with a barrister on 22 August 2007 to discuss legal issues related to dealing with the past. A further meeting has been agreed with an Investigations Worker to take this work forward.
- 3.3 Commissioners noted that a planned meeting with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) on 29 August 2007 to discuss the implications of a recent judicial review was postponed. The meeting will be rearranged.
- 3.4 The Chief Commissioner reported on her attendance at the annual British Irish Association conference on 7–9 September 2007 in Oxford. Key issues discussed included 'dealing with the past' and devolution of policing and justice.

4. Reports from Commissioners

- 4.1 Jonathan Bell and Colin Harvey reported on their attendance, with the Head of Legal Services, Policy and Research, at the Consultative Group meeting on the 'Legacy of the Past' on 23 August 2007 in Armagh. A position paper on this issue will be prepared by staff for consideration by Commissioners in due course.

5. Minutes of committee and working group meetings (HRC 94.3)

- 5.1 Commissioners noted the minutes of the following meetings:
- Bill of Rights Working Group – 23 May, 3 July and 17 July 2007

- Detention, Policing and Justice Committee – 5 June and 17 July 2007
- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee – 25 June 2007
- Equality Committee – 14 June 2007
- Legal Committee – 3 July and the emergency meeting held on 25 June 2007
- Performance Bonus Moderating Panel – 10 August 2007
- Policy Committee – 18 June 2007.

6. Team reports

6.1 Corporate Services (HRC 94.4)

- 6.1.1 Commissioners noted the Corporate Services report.
- 6.1.2 Commissioners approved the closure of the Commission's offices on 24 December 2007 to allow staff to take a privilege day's leave.
- 6.1.3 Commissioners noted the changes in budgets and expenditure plans in respect of Legal Services and funding for a proposed research project with the Equality Commission on the extent of human trafficking in Northern Ireland.
- 6.1.4 Commissioners approved a proposal to increase the delegated authority of the Legal Committee to commit expenditure up to £20,000 within the available Legal Services budget, without reference to the Commission.
- 6.1.5 The Commissioners expressed their appreciation to the Management Team for their work in managing the Commission during the interim period pending appointment of a Chief Executive.

6.2 Information, Education and Development (HRC 94.5)

- 6.2.1 Commissioners noted the Information, Education and Development report.

- 6.2.2 Commissioners noted that staff are currently preparing for two major conferences: the Commission's Annual Conference on the 21 September, and the 'Rights and Righteousness' Conference on 1 and 2 November 2007.
- 6.2.3 Commissioners congratulated the Information, Education and Development team on the Commission's first press conference to launch 'The Prison Within', on the outcome of the investigation into conditions for women in Hydebank Wood Prison, on 5 July 2007.
- 6.2.4 Commissioners noted that the first survey to seek the views of stakeholders on the Commission's work will be conducted in October 2007.

6.3 Legal Services, Research and Policy (HRC 94.6)

- 6.3.1 Commissioners noted the Legal Services, Research and Policy report.
- 6.3.2 Commissioners noted the list of cases currently undertaken by the Commission.
- 6.3.3 Commissioners noted the list of current consultations, which are being reviewed by the Commission for possible response.
- 6.3.4 Commissioners commended Legal Services, Research and Policy team on the depth and amount of consultation and legal work being undertaken.
- 6.3.5 Commissioners noted that the Commission will submit a paper to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on its inquiry into Devolution of Policing and Justice Matters and the Commission may be invited to give an oral submission. This paper will be discussed at the Policy Committee meeting on 15 October 2007.

7. Memoranda of Understanding (HR 94.7)

- 7.1 Commissioners noted the list of Memoranda of Understanding previously agreed with other statutory bodies, which set out liaison arrangements and how matters of mutual interest will be progressed.

- 7.2 Commissioners approved the Memorandum of Understanding with the Northern Ireland Court Service.

8. Terms of reference for the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee (HRC 94.8)

- 8.1 Commissioners agreed the terms of reference for the recently reconstituted Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee.
- 8.2 Commissioners noted that good communications between committees and working groups was required to ensure no overlapping of themes or duplication of work.

9. Accounts 2006–07 (HRC 94.9)

- 9.1 Commissioners approved the Commission's accounts for 2006–07, which have been revised slightly to take account of the outcome of the recent audit by the National Audit Office. The audit identified some minor issues, which were reported to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 10 September 2007.
- 9.2 The Annual Report and Accounts will be submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification and then laid before Parliament when it returns from summer recess in October 2007. It will then be published shortly afterwards.

The meeting was suspended for lunch at 1.05pm.

The meeting resumed at 1.55pm

10. Any other business

- 10.1 Commissioners agreed their participation in the Commission's Annual Conference on 21 September 2007.
- 10.2 Commissioners noted that Tom Duncan will represent the Commission at the Law Society of Northern Ireland President's Annual Dinner on 26 October 2007 in the Chief Commissioner's absence.

11. Dates and locations for meetings to September 2008 (HRC 94.10)

11.1 The dates of Commission and Policy Committee meeting for the next 12 months were agreed as follows:

15 October 2007 (Policy Committee)
19 November 2007 (Commission)
17 December 2007 (Policy Committee)
14 January 2008 (Commission)
11 February 2008 (Policy Committee)
10 March 2008 (Commission)
14 April 2008 (Policy Committee)
12 May 2008 (Commission)
9 June 2008 (Policy Committee)
7 July 2008 (Commission)
18 August 2008 (Policy Committee)
15 September 2008 (Commission)

11.2 In keeping with the Commission's commitment to hold two meetings outside of Belfast each year, it was agreed that the March and September 2008 Commission meetings will be held in Lisburn and Cookstown respectively.

The meeting closed at 2.50pm.

The meeting was followed by a reception with local stakeholders.

Approved: _____

Date: 26 November 2007