



**197th COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY 18 DECEMBER 2017 AT 10:00 am
IN THE OFFICE OF
THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Helen Ferguson
Helena Macormac
Paul Mageean
John McCallister
Eddie Rooney
Graham Shields

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director (Legal, Research and
Investigations, and Advice to Government)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and
Corporate Affairs)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications,
Information and Education, Public and Political
Affairs)
Zara Porter, Communications and Public Affairs
Officer (*agenda items 8 and 11*)
Hannah Russell, Policy and Research Officer
(*agenda items 8 and 9*)
Sara Donnelly, Legal and Research Officer
(*agenda item 10*)

As part of the ongoing induction process for Commissioners, Colin Caughey, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government) gave a presentation on 'Advice to Government – decision-making framework' prior to the Commission meeting.

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Minutes and Matters arising (HRC197.1)

2.1 Commissioners agreed the minutes of 27 November 2017, subject to minor amendments.

Action: Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2017 to be placed on the Commission's website.

2.2 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that he had received a reply from the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health asking for an agenda to be sent. A meeting is still to be arranged (paragraph 2.4 of the previous minutes refers).

2.3 The Community Engagement provisionally arranged for 16 January 2018 in Fermanagh is no longer suitable. A new date is to be arranged for late January, early February and will be confirmed as soon as possible (paragraph 2.5 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: New date to be arranged for Community Engagement in Fermanagh and confirmed with Commissioners as soon as possible

2.4 There were no further developments to report following the recent meeting with the Policing Board (paragraph 2.6 of the previous minutes refers).

2.5 The Chief Executive confirmed that he and the Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs) would be meeting with the Equality and Human Rights Commission in the New Year, to discuss taking over as Chair of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI). (paragraph 5.2 of the previous minutes refers).

2.6 Commissioners were updated on a recent meeting held with the Commission's landlord regarding the regeneration project in North Street. The Chief Executive confirmed that he and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) had looked at several possible new premises and confirmed that Commissioners would be kept updated on progress (paragraph 5.3 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Commissioners to be kept informed of progress

2.7 It was noted that there had been no further progress with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) on the business case for the Joint Secretariat (paragraph 5.4 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Commissioners to be kept updated on progress of business case with the NIO for the Joint Secretariat

2.8 It was noted that the animation videos would now be presented to Commissioners at the January 2018 Commission meeting (paragraph 8.2 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Animation videos to be previewed at Commission meeting in January 2018

3. Chief Commissioner's Report (HRC197.2)

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

- Meeting Dingwall Residents Association, Lurgan
- Annual Civil Justice Council Conference, London
- Speech to Soroptomists International human rights event in Craigavon
- Meeting Judith Thompson, Victims Commissioner on issue of human rights and amnesties/statute of limitations and Dealing with the Past (attended with the Chief Executive)

3.2 It was noted that the Joint Committee meeting due to take place on 23 January 2018 in Dublin would include an overnight stay, as Commissioners would be receiving social media training on the morning of 24 January 2018. Commissioners were asked to confirm their availability to the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) as soon as possible.

Action: Commissioners to confirm attendance at Joint Committee meeting

3.3 Commissioners discussed correspondence received from Sinn Féin on Addressing Housing Inequalities in North Belfast.

3.4 It was agreed that the Chief Commissioner would write back to Sinn Féin confirming that the issue has been brought to the attention of the Commissioners and

would also write to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It was also agreed that all responses would be shared with Commissioners.

Action: Respond to letter from Sinn Féin

Action: Write to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Action: Share responses with Commissioners

4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner Mageean updated Commissioners on the homelessness event 'Still Somebody' organised by the Westcourt Centre, which he participated in as a panel member and representative of the Commission.
- 4.2 Commissioners Ferguson and Macormac provided an update on a 'Roundtable with Harriett Harman', which took place after the Annual Statement Launch and was attended by representatives from Women's sector organisations.
- 4.3 Commissioners provided very positive feedback on the Annual Statement launch at Stormont Parliament.

5. Finance Report (HRC197.3)

- 5.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the financial report for November 2017 and provided details of committed expenditure and explanations for the variances against budget.
- 5.2 It was noted that payment from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had been received in December 2017 for the outstanding invoices.
- 5.3 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) confirmed that she and the Chief Executive had completed the budget build for 2018/19 and it had been sent on to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) for information.

6. Overview of Strategic and Business Planning (HRC197.4)

6.1 Commissioners discussed the Strategic and Business Planning processes.

6.2 It was agreed that a draft Business Plan for 2018/19 would be presented to the February Commission meeting for approval.

Action: Draft Business Plan for 2018/19 to be presented to February 2018 Commission meeting

6.3 It was agreed that Commissioners would discuss the Strategic Planning process in the new financial year and would decide if the Strategic Plan would cover a three-year or five-year period.

Action: Strategic Planning process to commence in new financial year

7. Investigation Report (HRC197.5)

7.1 Commissioners discussed whether the Commission should hold an inquiry with a panel and public hearings, as was the case for the Emergency Healthcare inquiry, or whether it should conduct an investigation like the Traveller investigation.

7.2 Commissioners were briefed on the length of time and what was entailed to complete an inquiry and an investigation.

7.3 It was agreed that staff would be asked to update the scoping papers on housing, mental health and poverty and that the Commission would consider committing to either an inquiry or investigation as one of the Business Plan objectives for 2018/19.

Action: Staff to update scoping papers and Commissioners to consider whether an inquiry or investigation to be included in the Business Plan for 2018/19

Hannah Russell, Policy and Research Officer and Zara Porter, Communications and Public Affairs Officer joined the meeting

8. HMP Magilligan visit – update paper (HRC197.6)

8.1 Commissioners were updated on the recent visit to HMP Magilligan.

8.2 It was agreed that Commissioners should also visit Maghaberry Prison and Hydebank Prison before the end of March 2018.

Action: Visits to Maghaberry Prison and Hydebank Prison to be arranged by the end of March 2018

Zara Porter left the meeting

9. Traveller Accommodation - Investigation Report

9.1 Commissioners noted that amendments had been made to the investigation report as agreed at the previous Commission meeting.

9.2 Commissioners discussed the launch of the report and it was agreed that there would be two launch events, one in Belfast and one elsewhere.

9.3 Dates for the launch events were to be arranged and confirmed with Commissioners as soon as possible.

Action: Launch events dates to be arranged and confirmed to Commissioners as soon as possible

Hannah Russell left the meeting

Sara Donnelly, Legal and Research Officer joined the meeting

10. Legal Update (HRC197.7)

10.1 Commissioners were updated on application HRC197.7 SC (extension of housing benefit beyond 52 weeks during absence) and the decision from the Judge that the case should not proceed and that the application had been resolved.

10.2 Commissioners were updated on application JT (legality of current arrangements for retention of DNA). It was agreed that the Commission would seek a protective costs order with Counsel.

Action: Seek protective costs order with Counsel

10.3 Commissioners were updated on application NM (access to MoD pension for unmarried widow). It was noted that the draft opinion from Counsel was due this week. As proceedings in the case may be instituted before the next Commission meeting and time was of the essence, Commissioners agreed that any papers should be circulated to them immediately and an emergency meeting arranged, if necessary, to consider next steps.

Action: Papers to be circulated and emergency meeting arranged if necessary to consider next steps

Sara Donnelly left the meeting

Zara Porter joined the meeting

11. Communications Report and Press Clippings (HRC197.8)

11.1 Commissioners were given a short presentation on the website and were shown the areas that had been or are due to be updated.

11.2 It was noted that there was an extremely good attendance at the Annual Statement launch on 11 December 2017 and high media interest.

Zara Porter left the meeting

12. Information Paper – NI Deliberative Forum Report (HRC197.9)

12.1 Commissioners discussed the NI Deliberative Forum Report, which detailed the results of the partnership project the Commission entered into with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT).

12.2 The draft report was approved and it was suggested that an Executive Summary could be considered in consultation with the NHSCT, as well as a Foreword.

Action: Executive Summary and Foreword to be considered in consultation with the NHSCT

13. Any Other Business

13.1 There being no further business, the meeting closed at 3.15 pm.