



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

29 October 2018

**206th COMMISSION MEETING
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
Eddie Rooney
Graham Shields
John McCallister

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) (agenda items 1-7)
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant (agenda items 7-12)
Hannah Russell, Senior Policy and Research Officer (Agenda
item 7)
Rhyannon Blythe, Senior Legal and Research Officer (Agenda
items 10+11)
Zara Porter, Communications and Public Affairs Officer (Agenda
item 11)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the 205th Commission meeting held on 24 September 2018 and closed minute of 12 October 2018, and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 205th Commission meeting held on 24 September 2018 were agreed, subject to a minor amendment.

Action: Approved minutes of the 205th Commission meeting to be uploaded to the Commission's website.

2.2 The Minutes of the Closed Confidential meeting held on 12 October 2018 were agreed, subject to a minor amendment.

2.3 The Governor of Hydebank has confirmed that the Commission can visit the women's prison. Commissioners are to confirm their availability (item 2.3 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to confirm their availability for visit to Hydebank.

2.4 It was noted that invitations had been issued for the Roundtable on Older Prisoners and Social Care on 23 November 2018 (item 2.4 of the previous meeting refers). The Inspector of Prisons Ireland has been invited to participate. Commissioner Mageean confirmed that he would be attending.

2.5 It was noted that the Framework Document with the NIO had been circulated to Commissioners (item 4.3 of the previous meeting refers).

2.6 The Chief Executive confirmed that Brexit had been added as an additional risk on the Commission's risk register (item 5.4 of the previous meeting refers).

3. Chief Commissioner's Report

3.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on meetings and events he had

attended since the last meeting. These included:

- Meeting with David Lavery and Grainne McKeever re personal litigants' reference group.
- Community engagement in East Belfast.
- Chaired Roundtable on Traveller Accommodation (update on progress of report recommendations).
- Meeting with Eilis McDaniel and colleagues, Department of Health (NI) re Looked After Children.
- Evidence to British/Irish Parliamentary Assembly Committee D Inquiry into cross-border jurisdictional implications of abortion policy in BIPA jurisdictions.
- Meeting with Colette Fitzgerald, Head of European Commission in Northern Ireland.
- Speech at International Ombudsman Institute/NIPSO Conference, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.
- Meeting with Lord Justice Gillen.

3.2 The Chief Commissioner updated Commissioners on the progress of the mandate and confirmed that meetings have been arranged with Parliamentarians in Westminster on 14 and 15 November 2018.

4. Commissioners' Reports

4.1 Commissioners provided an update on the recent Community Engagement in East Belfast and it was agreed that further discussion was required on whether future community engagements should be thematic or geographical.

4.2 There was one further Community Engagement to be arranged in the financial year, which would be a joint engagement with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC).

Action: Joint Community Engagement with IHREC to be arranged before the end of the financial year.

4.3 The Chief Executive reported that staff were keen to discuss community engagement and have it linked to the Commission's Strategic and Business Plans.

4.4 It was agreed that a paper on Community Engagement would be

drafted and presented to Commissioners for January's Commission meeting.

Action: Paper on Community Engagement to be drafted for presentation to Commissioners in January 2019.

5. Chief Executive Report (incl. Finance Report and Risk Register)

- 5.1 The Chief Executive reported on events and meetings he had attended. These included:
 - Meeting with Frances McCandless, Charity Commission.
 - Meeting with Olive McLeod and Theresa Nixon, RQIA.
 - Spoke at PPR Conference – Conscious Cruelty: Social Security, the Economy and Human Rights
 - Meeting with Fiona Chamberlain, Crown Solicitor's Office.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that Zara Porter had been appointed to the temporary fixed-term post of Communications and Public Affairs Officer (Staff Officer). An internal trawl would be held to backfill the Communications and Public Affairs Officer (EO1 Grade).
- 5.3 It was noted that shortlisting for the temporary fixed-term post of Policy and Research Officer is due to take place on 30 October 2018.
- 5.4 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the Financial Report for September 2018. It was noted that the Financial Report had been revised as part of the November monitoring round and that the total allocated budget was anticipated to be spent by the year-end.
- 5.5 The Director reported that the National Audit Office had confirmed that Grant Thornton had been appointed to conduct the external audit of the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts. Grant Thornton are the Commission's Internal Auditors and they have written to the Commission to resign from that role because of a conflict of interest. They are currently seeking a novation agreement to transfer the remainder of the contract to another Internal Auditor.
- 5.6 GDPR – it was noted that the Information Asset Register had been

updated to include reference to the Commission's Data Retention and Disposal Schedule and was submitted to the NIO at the start of October 2018. All staff and Commissioners have been requested to check their computers, to confirm that they have deleted any personal information that falls under GDPR, and to check against the Data Retention and Disposal Schedule.

- 5.7 The Director confirmed that the Stewardship Statement which provides assurance to the NIO's Accounting Officer that the Commission has adequate governance controls in place is due to be submitted to the NIO.

6. Brexit update

- 6.1 The Chief Commissioner reported on the Roundtable event on the protection of human rights and equalities in Northern Ireland after the UK's exit from the European Union, hosted by Robin Walker MP and Lord Duncan, held on 23 October 2018.

7. Annual Statement

- 7.1 Commissioners reviewed the full Annual Statement and discussed each chapter making minor amendments.
- 7.2 The Annual Statement was approved following minor amendments that will be made before the report is sent for printing. A final copy with tracked changes to be sent to Commissioners.

Action: Commissioners to receive the final copy of the document with any further changes tracked accordingly.

8. Strategic Plan update

- 8.1 Commissioners were provided with an update on the stakeholder strategic planning roundtable planned for 31 October 2018 in Belfast and 8 November 2018 in Derry/Londonderry.
- 8.2 Commissioners agreed the date of 19 November 2018 for a joint Commissioner/Staff strategic planning meeting.

8.3 Commissioners agreed that the first draft of the Strategic Plan would be on the December Commission meeting agenda and would go out to public consultation in January.

Action: First draft of Strategic Plan to be available for the December 2018 Commission meeting.

9. Communications report

9.1 Commissioners were briefed on the Communications report and updated on recent events including the educational visits to Schools.

10. Legal Functions report

10.1 Commissioners were updated on the legal functions report and were provided with updates on the litigation files including a legal challenge to retention of DNA and other material by the PSNI and Termination of Pregnancy and a challenge to a Ministry of Defence decision not to pay a full pension to an unmarried widow.

11. Submission to Women and Equalities Committee on Termination of Pregnancy

11.1 Commissioners discussed the submission to Women and Equalities Committee on Termination of Pregnancy. The submission was agreed following minor amendments.

Action: Final version to be shared with Commissioners.

12. Any other Business

12.1 There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 3pm.