



**189th COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY 27 February 2017 AT 10:00 am
IN THE OFFICE OF
THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: John Corey (Chair)
Christine Collins (until item 8)
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long (from item 2)
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds (from item 10)
Paul Yam

Apologies: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner

In Attendance: David Russell, Acting Director
Claire Martin, Communications Worker
Zara Porter, Digital Communications Assistant
(Agenda items 8-13)
Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker (agenda
item 10)
Sara Donnelly, Legal & Research Assistant
(Agenda items 10 & 14)
Grainne McKeever, Ulster University (agenda item
14)

1.0 Declarations of interest

1.1 There were no conflicts of interest.

2.0 Draft minutes of the 188th Commission meeting (HRC189.1)

2.1 The draft minutes of the 188th Commission meeting held on 23 January 2017 were agreed subject to amendments.

Action: Minutes of the 188th Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website.

Claire Martin left the meeting at 10.20am

Commissioner Long joined the meeting at 10.20am

Closed section of the minute discussed at 10.20am

The open meeting resumed at 10.50am

Claire Martin joined the meeting at 10.50am

3.0 Matters arising

3.1 Commissioners asked for an update on a proposed media interview with the Irish Times. The Communications Worker confirmed that a date had not yet been set for the joint IHREC and NIHRC interview with the Irish Times.

Action: Communications Worker to follow up progress of Joint Irish Times interview with IHREC

3.2 The Acting Director reported on Item 6.1 in the February minutes in relation to a Joint Secretariat Post. He highlighted there had been no further progress on this issue and NIHRC await confirmation from IHREC if funding for a post is available.

Action: Acting Director to continue to liaise with IHREC re Joint Secretariat Post.

3.3 Commissioners were updated in relation to Item 6.6 of the February minutes. The Acting Director confirmed that a letter had now been forwarded to the RQIA around issues arising from disputes between family members and nursing/residential care home providers.

3.4 The Communications Worker updated Commissioners on Item 11.2 of the February minutes. The Communications Worker confirmed that the process for events was being reviewed.

3.5 The Acting Director updated Commissioners on Item 14 of the February minutes in relation to scoping work on

Article 3 of the Convention. Commissioners were informed that a tender process for taking this work forward was now in progress.

3.6 The Acting Director updated Commissioners on the Termination of Pregnancy case. Commissioners were informed that the Caseworker was at present attending a Court hearing and would update the meeting later on the status of the proceedings.

3.7 The Acting Director confirmed that the Commissioners would receive further information on an application for assistance regarding a criminal prosecution case.

Action: Caseworkers to provide Commissioners with an update on the application when full papers are received on the case.

3.8 Commissioner Corey updated Commissioners on the Governance project. He outlined the timetable for delivery, which included an initial proposal at the April Commission meeting.

Action: Commissioner Corey to present initial proposals of the Governance project at April Commission meeting.

4.0 Chief Commissioners Report (HRC189.2)

4.1 Commissioners received the Chief Commissioner's report detailing the meetings and events he had attended since the last meeting. These included:

- Community engagement meeting in Newry, Mourne and Down Council
- Speech to All-Island sectoral civic dialogue on human rights under the Good Friday Agreement, Maynooth University
- Meeting with Evangelical Alliance
- Meetings with Parliamentarians including Joint Committee on Human Right, Kris Hopkin minister of state NIO, Danny Kinahan MP, Tom Elliot MP, Margaret Ritchie MP, and Stephen Pound MP

5.0 Commissioners' Reports

5.1 Commissioner Kerr confirmed that he would be attending a meeting with the Pat Finucane Centre and

the Chief Commissioner in Derry/Londonderry on 14 March 2017.

- 5.2 Commissioner McBride updated on his positive engagements with the Newry, Mourne and Down Council meetings and thanked staff involved in the organisation of the day.
- 5.3 Commissioner McBride informed Commissioners that he had spoken in a personal capacity at a recent Relatives for Justice Conference.

6.0 Finance Report (HRC189.3)

- 6.1 The Acting Director presented the finance report and reported that the Audit and Risk Committee had signed off the draft Strategic Internal Audit Plan from Capita. It was noted that the Internal Audit Plan included induction of new Commissioners and Commissioner Long suggested it would be useful for current Commissioners to provide advice for consideration in the induction process.

Action: Commissioners will be provided an opportunity to provide comment for the purposes of the new induction.

- 6.2 Commissioner Long queried an under spend in the legal budget. After an update from the Acting Director, it was noted that funds would be accrued from the ongoing legal case on Termination of Pregnancy.

7.0 Business Plan (HRC189.4)

- 7.1 The Acting Director presented the Business Plan to Commissioners. Subject to minor style amendments, which were noted and agreed by the Acting Director, Commissioners agreed the Business Plan.

Action: Commissioners agreed the Business Plan for 2017/18 could be published.

Commissioner Collins left the meeting at 11.15am

8.0 Legal Functions Report (HRC189.4)

- 8.1 The Acting Director reported that same-sex couples in N.I were not able to access free IVF treatment, noting this was a potential Article 14 ECHR issue.
- 8.2 The Communications Worker reported that NIHRC had received a query on Twitter, relating to NIHRC's position on the Finucane case, which has been answered.
- 8.3 Commissioner Kerr raised the issue of investigations into the past and press reports that there existed an imbalance of cases against the army and police. It was noted that the DPP and PSNI had refuted these reports. Discussion also arose over speculation that there may be derogation from the ECHR in overseas service personnel action, and that this could lead to decreased protections for service personnel and the rights of their families.
- 8.4 Commissioners agreed the Legal Functions Report.

9.0 Annual Statement update Social Security (HRC189.6)

- 9.1 The Acting Director presented the Annual Statement update to Commissioners. Subject to minor amendments to wording, which were noted and agreed by the Acting Director, Commissioners agreed this section of the Annual Statement update.

Commissioner Reynolds and Rhyannon Blythe, Assistant Caseworker, joined the meeting.

- 9.2 The Assistant Caseworker gave an update on the Termination case, reporting that judgement was due in March 2017, and that the query on NIHRC's power to take the case would still go to the Supreme Court.

Rhyannon Blythe left the meeting and Hannah Russell, Policy & Research Officer, joined the meeting.

10.0 Investigations Update and Oxford Economics engagement

- 10.1 The Policy & Research Officer gave an update on the investigation, reporting that the majority of the required interviews had been conducted in February, with several interviews ongoing.
- 10.2 Commissioner Reynolds asked whether it was possible to receive a response from across the political spectrum. Discussion arose on the operational practicalities of this, which could result in the time frame being extended. The Acting Director confirmed that staff would make contact with all relevant parties however the operational focus of the investigation had to be maintained.
- 10.3 The Acting Director informed Commissioners that Oxford Economics had been contracted to conduct an analysis for the investigation. The Policy & Research Officer highlighted that Oxford Economics had begun their analysis, and that their full report would be complete by the end of April 2017.
- 10.4 The Policy & Research Officer told Commissioners that the overview chapter of the investigation would be circulated to Commissioners at the April meeting.

Action: Overview Chapter of Investigation to be forwarded to Commissioners in April 2017

Hannah Russell, Policy & Research Officer, left the meeting.

11.0 Communications update (HRC189.7)

- 11.1 The Communications Worker updated Commissioners on communications, highlighting the successful community engagement day with Newry, Mourne and Down Council.
- 11.2 The Communications Worker informed Commissioners that the Chief Commissioner would attend a meeting with the Pat Finucane Centre and North West Migrants Forum, alongside Commissioner Kerr, on 14 March 2017 in Derry/Londonderry.

- 11.3 Commissioners were updated on the engagement on mental health with Prince's Trust and Young Ambassadors in February 2017.
- 11.4 The Communications Worker informed Commissioners that the education and training review was underway, and that staff were attending a plenary session on 2 March 2017 to input into the review.
- 11.5 Commissioners were informed that the NICS Guide on the NIHRC website was to be updated, with NICS funding this.
- 11.6 The Communications Worker highlighted that International Women's Day was taking place on 8 March 2017, and NIHRC were marking it with a visit to the Shankill Women's Centre on 9 March 2017. She also provided Commissioners with an overview of the yearly website analysis, and gave an update on social media, print and broadcast coverage.

Commissioner Yam left the meeting.

12.0 Any other Business

- 12.1 The Acting Director highlighted exploratory joint projects with the FCO on sport and human rights and opportunities around the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Spring 2018.
- 12.2 Commissioners welcomed the ongoing work with the FCO and the other potential pieces of joint work.
- 12.3 Commissioner Marion Reynolds raised a query around access to archive files on the Commissioners tablets. The Acting Director confirmed he would check this query with I.T

Action: Acting Director to check tablet access query with I.T

13.0 Information papers (HRC189.8)

- 13.1 Papers for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) initiative with the Commission on a participative community approach to delivering services locally was considered.

Grainne McKeever and Sara Donnelly joined the meeting.

14.0 Personal Litigants Research update

- 14.1 Grainne McKeever and Sara Donnelly updated Commissioners on the ongoing Personal Litigants research project and of the key milestones. Commissioners were informed of the challenges in securing client referrals and of the steps being taken to address this including increased marketing materials. Commissioners thanked Grainne and Sara for their informative presentation.

Grainne McKeever and Sara Donnelly left the meeting.

The meeting closed at 2pm.