



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

25 March 2019

**211th 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
John McCallister
Eddie Rooney
Graham Shields

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations,
and Advice to Government) (Agenda items 1-5)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate
Affairs) (Agenda items 1-8)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information and
Education, Public and Political Affairs)
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant (Agenda items 9-14)
Jason McKeown, Communications and Public Affairs Officer
(Agenda items 8+11)
Sara Donnelly Clegg, Legal and Research Officer (Agenda items
9+14)
Hannah Russell, Senior Policy and Research Officer (Agenda
item 14)
Peter Purcell, Temporary Digital Communications Assistant
(Agenda item 11)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the 210th Commission minutes, and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 210th Commission meeting were agreed as an accurate record subject to minor amendments.

Action: Minutes of the 210th Commission meeting to be uploaded to Commission website.

2.2 It was noted that the first draft of research on Evolving Justice Arrangements Post Brexit would not be with Commissioners until lunchtime. Commissioners were asked to go through the report and it was hoped that it would be approved by the Joint Committee the following day, subject to amendments (paragraph 2.2 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to read through draft research before the Joint Committee meeting.

2.3 It was noted that the programme for the visit of the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights had been finalised. There would be a roundtable for the women's sector on the morning of Tuesday 30 April 2019, and the Commission meeting would take place at 1.00pm (paragraph 2.3 of the previous meeting refers).

2.4 To date only one council has responded to the Chief Commissioner's letter inviting them to participate in Community Engagements. This was a holding letter because of Purdah in which they confirmed they would provide a response in June. It was noted this was likely to be the case for the other Council areas (paragraph 2.4 of the previous meeting refers).

2.5 Commissioners were asked to hold Wednesday 8 May 2019 in their diaries for the 'reflection day' (paragraph 3.3 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to hold Wednesday 8 May 2019 in diaries.

2.6 It was noted that the Commission had applied to take part in the Boardroom Apprentice Programme 2019. It was agreed that Commissioners would be kept updated on progress of the application (paragraph 3.4 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Commissioners to be kept updated on progress of Boardroom Apprentice application.

2.7 Commissioners noted that confirmation of the budget for 2019/20 had not yet been confirmed as the NIO Board were not meeting until the afternoon of 25 March 2019 (paragraph 5.2 of the previous meeting refers).

2.8 It was noted that the Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government) would update Commissioners on the Annual Statement at the June Commission meeting (paragraph 7.2 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government) to provide update on Annual Statement at the June 2019 Commission meeting.

2.9 The Chief Commissioner confirmed that he would write to Sir Nicholas Bratza, before the end of April 2019, inviting him to be the keynote speaker at the Annual Statement Launch in December 2019 (paragraph 7.4 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Chief Commissioner to write to Sir Nicholas Bratza before the end of April 2019.

2.10 The Commission had received a draft proposal for the work on Cumulative Impact Assessment from Landman Economics. A formal letter of offer would be drafted with a view to work commencing on the research in April 2019.

Action: Letter of offer to be drafted with a view to work commencing in April 2019.

2.11 It was noted that the Education Summary would be brought to the April 2019 Commission meeting (paragraph 13.2 of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Education Summary to be brought to the April 2019 Commission meeting.

2.12 Commissioners noted that the recent Freedom of Information request

from the Committee on the Administration of Justice had been responded to within the necessary timescale and a response had not yet been received (paragraph 14.1 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 Steve Aiken, MLA, UUP
- Evidence to Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry into abortion law in Northern Ireland
- Skype with Pacific Resources Trust
- Global Alliance of NHRIs annual general assembly which included meetings with Michael Gaffney, Irish Ambassador to the UK; Julian Braithwaite, UK Ambassador to the UN; presentation to GANHRI
- Meeting with Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
- Meeting with DUP MLAs and party officials on the work of the Commission
- Meeting with Anne McReynolds, CEO, The Mac
- Presentation to Permanent Secretaries Group meeting

4. Commissioners' Reports

4.1 It was noted that Commissioners Helena Macormac, John McCallister, and Eddie Rooney attended the St Patrick's Day Reception hosted by the Joint Secretaries of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat.

4.2 Commissioners Helen Ferguson and Graham Shields provided an update on the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 11 March 2019, including:

- The Commission's move to Account NI
- Updates made to the Commission's risk register
- Information on the Commission's Gift and Hospitality Register.

5. Finance Report

5.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the financial report for February 2019 and the variances between budget and actual spend to date were noted.

5.2 It was noted that the Director would circulate the Register of Interests and Related Party Declarations to Commissioners and Senior Managers for completion.

Action: Register of Interests and Related Party Declarations to be updated and returned to the Director by 31 March 2019.

5.3 It was noted that Commissioners and staff are due to complete the annual 'Responsible for Information' E-Learning. Details will be issued in due course.

Action: Director to issue details of 'Responsible for Information' E-Learning.

6. Risk Register

6.1 The Chief Executive reported that there had been no significant changes in the Risk Register since the last Commission meeting.

6.2 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported that she had met with the Chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee and had taken him through the process of recording risks, controls, incidents and the reports available.

7. Final Quarterly Report against the Business Plan

7.1 The Chief Executive updated Commissioners on the final quarterly report against the Business Plan 2018-19.

7.2 It was noted that a small number of the targets would not be met due to circumstances outside the Commission's control.

8. Business Plan and Strategic Plan

- 8.1 *Business Plan* – Commissioners discussed and approved the draft Business Plan 2019-20 noting that formal notification of the Commission’s budget was still to be provided by the Northern Ireland Office.
- 8.2 Commissioners remained concerned that a projected reduction of the budget based on the fourth year of reductions under the Comprehensive Spending Review following further significant reductions would impact on operations for the new financial year.
- 8.3 *Strategic Plan* – the Strategic Plan for 2019-22 was discussed by Commissioners and approved subject to minor agreed amendments.

9. Application for Assistance

- 9.1 The Legal and Research Officer briefed Commissioners on the Application for Assistance to a litigant in person in regards to a claim of unlawful arrest, assault and battery and a breach of the applicant’s human rights.
- 9.2 Commissioners considered the Application for Assistance in line with the Commission’s legal processes policy. It was agreed that the Commission would not intervene in this instance.

10. Handling Unacceptable Behaviour from Members of the Public

- 10.1 The Chief Executive briefed the Commissioners on the amendments made to the paper, which were completed to reflect comments from staff, the Union and the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- 10.2 Commissioners approved the policy and the implementation of the policy in practice once training for staff and Commissioners had taken place.

Action: Policy to be implemented when training on the policy completed.

11. Communications Report and update on NICS website

- 11.1 Commissioners were presented with the Commission's human rights updated materials/or civil servants on the NICS website. The updates included updating content, making the site quicker, easier to navigate and with the addition of quizzes on each section. Commissioners praised the updated website.
- 11.2 Commissioners were presented with the Digital Communications report which included an update on social media hits, and the top trending posts.

12. Information Paper – Judgement in the matter of an application by Geraldine Finucane for Judicial Review (NI)

- 12.1 The Judgement in the matter of an application by Geraldine Finucane for Judicial Review was presented. Commissioners affirmed the position on the need for an Article 2 (right to life) Compliant Inquiry as soon as possible which reflects the Commission's recent submission to the UN Committee on Torture.

13. Any other Business

- 13.1 Commissioners were updated on the legal opinion received in relation to the challenge to a Ministry of Defence decision not to pay a full pension to an unmarried widow. Commissioners agreed to continue with the challenge.
- 13.2 Commissioners were briefed on the Community Engagement to Armagh on 26 March 2019 as part of the Joint Committee.

The meeting closed at 15:40.