



**27 January 2020**

**220<sup>th</sup> 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  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and  
Corporate Affairs)  
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information  
and Education, Public and Political Affairs)  
Hannah Russell, Director (Legal, Research and  
Investigations, and Advice to Government)  
Julia Stella, Boardroom Apprentice  
Zara Porter, Communications and Public Affairs Officer  
(Agenda item 9)  
Jason McKeown, Communications and Public Affairs  
Officer (Agenda item 9)

## 1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## 2. Minutes of the 219th Commission meeting

2.1 The Minutes of the 219<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting held on 16 December 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

**Action: 219<sup>th</sup> Commission minutes to be uploaded to Commission website**

2.2 The Minutes of the Closed Commission meeting held on 16 December 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.3 It was noted that the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) would be issuing invitations for the joint event with key speaker Lord Patten at Belfast City Hall on 26 February 2020 to mark both Commissions 20<sup>th</sup> anniversaries (item 2.2 of the previous meeting refers).

2.4 It was noted that although the Commission had received an email from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) finance department on its budget, a formal letter confirming the budget for 2019/20 had still not been received (item 2.3 of the previous meeting refers).

2.5 It was agreed that the draft Business Plan 2020-2021 would be brought to the February 2020 Commission meeting for final consideration (item 9.3 of the previous meeting refers).

2.6 It was noted that the strike out application from the Ministry of Defence for the NM case on access to pension did not go ahead on 6 January 2020, as the Commission had no solicitor in post with a practising certificate. The Chief Commissioner applied and has now obtained his own practising certificate. The strike out application is now listed for 3 February 2020 (item 10.1 of the previous meeting refers).

2.7 It was noted that papers for leave for judicial review in an unspent conviction case was due to be submitted by 28 January 2020 with leave scheduled for early March 2020 (item 10.1 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 Commission meeting. These included:

- Meeting with Eugene McNamee, UU re joint event on Artificial Intelligence and public services for the Imagine Festival
- Meeting with Maureen O'Reilly and Charles Little – family members murdered by patients re issues surrounding serious adverse incidents, coroner inquests and other issues
- Meeting with Irish Secretariat/DFAT accompanied by Alison Harvey re joint committee legal analysis
- Joint meeting with Children's, Older Person, Equality and Victims Commissioners
- Meeting with Conor Murphy and Naomi Long
- Meeting with Colette Fitzgerald, NI European Commission Office

3.2 The Chief Commissioner also reported on upcoming meetings and events that he would be attending.

3.3 It was noted that the following policy responses had been submitted since the last Commission meeting:

- Belfast City Council multi-lingual signage consultation
- Policing Plan – 2020-2025, Policing Board
- Submission to UN Human Rights Committee on list of issues for ICCPR treaty examination

## **4. Commissioners' Reports**

- 4.1 Commissioner Shields reported on the Positive Futures launch that he and Commissioner McCallister had attended the previous week. The project aims to transform how the justice system deals with sexual violence and learning disability. The guide and toolkit includes an animated video, an easy-read guide to the justice system and a card, which people can give to the police explaining who they are and how they communicate best.
- 4.2 Commissioner McCallister provided an update on the recent joint Independent Mechanism in Northern Ireland (IMNI) meeting with the Equality Commission NI.
- 4.3 Commissioner Rooney reported on the workshop on mental health approaches that he had attended at Maghaberry Prison. He noted that there was direct involvement of serving prisoners who were integrated into the whole process. The event was well organised, very valuable and reinforced why the Commission need to keep prisons as a focused area of work.

## **5. Finance Report and Risk Register**

- 5.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the financial report for December 2019 and provided details on any variances in budget.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive presented the risk register for January 2020 and highlighted the risks that had changed since the previous meeting.
- 5.3 After discussion it was agreed that the risk 'Failure in Good Governance' should be moved from high to critical, as in terms of good governance the Commission's financial position meant it was potentially failing in its duties and hampered in complying fully with the Paris Principles. The narrative with the risk was also to be updated to reflect these changes.

**Action: Risk Register to be updated to reflect rating change and narrative for 'Failure in Good Governance'**

5.4 The risk 'Failure to Ensure Quality of Advices' was to be changed from low to critical, as the Commission does not have the staff capacity to effectively deal with a likely increase in consultations/submissions from the Assembly now that it is fully operational again.

**Action: Risk Register to be updated to reflect rating change and narrative for 'Failure to Ensure Quality of Advices'**

## **6. Update on Budget, Finance and Premises**

- **Budget and Finance**

6.1 Budget and finance were discussed in a closed meeting.

- **Premises**

6.2 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) confirmed that HM Treasury had formally approved the business case for the proposed move to Alfred Street.

6.3 The Crown Solicitor's Office are continuing to negotiate the lease with the landlord's solicitors. It was hoped that the Commission would be in a position to move mid-June 2020.

## **7. 'New Decade New Approach' and the Commission's work**

7.1 The Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government) provided a paper on the 'New Decade New Approach' document and the Commission's work.

7.2 The overview considered the extent to which proposals contained in 'New Decade New Approach' could progress the Commission's recommendations from its Annual Statement. It also highlighted new bodies that the Commission should

consider engaging with, as well as the additional roles the Commission may have, particularly on the Petition of Concern and Ad-Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights.

## **8. Maximising the involvement of people with disabilities in the realisation of the UNCRPD in NI**

- 8.1 The Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government) reported on the proposal 'Maximising the involvement of people with disabilities in the realisation of the UNCRPD in Northern Ireland', drafted by ECNI and the Commission as IMNI. The proposal entailed setting up an advisory committee and working arrangements
- 8.2 Commissioners endorsed the proposed recommendations that IMNI wished to adopt including the setting up of the advisory group.

## **9. Communications Report**

- 9.1 The Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs) updated Commissioners on press coverage, policy and human rights training and upcoming events.
- 9.2 It was noted that the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment had reviewed the lesson plans and have committed to circulating the information to post primary schools. They will also be available on their microsite.
- 9.3 The Communications and Public Affairs Officer reported on the recent Sports and Human Rights Forum meeting and it was noted that the Forum now have a dedicated page on the Commission's website.
- 9.4 Commissioners were updated on school visits undertaken in

November and December 2019 and a forthcoming visit to Priory College scheduled for 28 February 2020.

- 9.5 It was noted that there were plans to update the Commission's website to ensure fully compliant with security and accessibility.

## **10. Chief Commissioner Transition Arrangements**

- 10.1 It was noted that formal sign-off by the Secretary of State on the transition arrangements had not yet been received.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- 11.1 There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.