



28 September 2020

227th COMMISSION MEETING

Held via Microsoft Teams

Present: Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner
Helen Henderson
Jonathan Kearney
David A Lavery CB
Maura Muldoon
Eddie Rooney
Stephen White

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs)
Hannah Russell, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government)
Jacqueline McClintock, Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer (Agenda items 1-3)
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant (Agenda items 3-10)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) (Agenda items 5-6)
Nikita Brijpaul, Boardroom Apprentice

The Chief Commissioner welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new Commission Board and also welcomed Nikita Brijpaul who is the Commission's Boardroom Apprentice for 2020-21.

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 There were no apologies.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the 226th Commission meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the 226th Commission meeting held on 24 August 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

Action: 226th Commission meeting minutes to be uploaded to the website.

- 2.2. The minutes of the closed meeting held on 24 August 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

- 2.3 It was noted that the Chief Commissioner had written to the Northern Ireland Office regarding the Commission's powers. A copy of the Opinion the Commission had received was also included with the letter. A response has not yet been received (item 2.3 of the 226th minutes refers).

Action: Chief Commissioner will update Commissioners when response received from the NIO.

- 2.4 Commissioner Rooney provided an update on the roundtable discussion on human rights, drug addiction and substance misuse. It was noted that there was delay in completing the final report and that it would be available for the October Commission meeting (item 4.1 of the 226th minutes refers).

Action: Report on proposed inquiry on drug addiction and substance abuse to be available for the next Commission meeting.

- 2.5 Commissioners noted that the roundtable on children missing from care has been postponed until October or November 2020 (item 8.2 of the 226th minutes refers).

Action: Roundtable to be arranged with specific stakeholders in October or November 2020.

2.6 It was noted that the legal clinic had been closed and relevant details had been shared on social media and the Commission's website. As previously agreed, a review of the closure would be discussed at the November Commission meeting (item 10.2 of the 226th minutes refers).

Action: Review of legal clinic closure to be discussed at the November 2020 Commission meeting.

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:

- Meetings with the Public Health Agency, Royal College of Midwives, Belfast, Southern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts, British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians and Royal College of Nurses re abortion monitoring initiative
- Chaired civic society roundtable on abortion monitoring initiative
- Meeting with service delivery organisations working on drug addiction issues
- Meeting with Carla Lockhart MP
- Meeting with Colum Eastwood MP
- Meeting with Julie Anne McNally re rights to visit family members in residential care and nursing homes
- Meeting with Chris Hazzard MP
- Roundtable Home Office Vulnerability Advisory Group re new immigration arrangements post UK government leaving the EU
- Meeting with Stephen Farry MP
- Speech to North West Migrants Forum launch of campaign around the Common Travel Area – Bridge End
- Meeting with Human Rights Consortium
- Breakfast meeting with Jaoa Vale de Almeida, EU Ambassador to the UK (joint meeting with Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission)
- Roundtable civil consultation organised by the NIO and led by Madeleine Allesandri, Permanent Secretary
- Roundtable organised by the NIO to discuss 'dedicated mechanism' and recent change to immigration rules
- Meeting with Andrea Coomber, CEO, Justice

- Meeting with Claire Hanna MP
- 3.2 It was noted that the following submissions had been made since the previous meeting:
- Response to DoJ consultation on proposals to amend the legislation governing the retention of DNA and fingerprints in Northern Ireland
 - Letter to NIHE in response to the Traveller Accommodation Strategy

4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner Rooney provided an update on the second round table with organisations working in the field of drug addiction.

5. Chief Executive's Report

- 5.1 The Chief Executive provide an oral updated to Commissioners on the Comprehensive Spending Review and Job Evaluation exercise. Correspondence received from the Northern Ireland Office on both matters was also considered.

Action: Chief Executive to write to the Permanent Secretary setting out the additional assurance process agreed for the Job Evaluation by the Commission. Commissioners Eddie Rooney, Maura Muldoon and David Lavery are to implement the assurance process.

6. Finance Report

- 6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the financial report for September 2020 and provided details on variances against budget.
- 6.2 It was noted that the budget for 2020-21 had been revised with legal reduced to £10,000 and research reduced to £20,000.

7. Annual Statement

- 7.1 Commissioners considered in detail and approved the content of the Annual Statement. A final copy with any updates to be provided. The launch will be in December 2020 and is likely to be a virtual event.

8. Legal Functions Report

- 8.1 The legal functions report was considered. An update on existing court challenges was provided including a forthcoming application from the Commission to deal with the challenge to rehabilitation of offenders' legislation by remote hearing if necessary. An urgent application to intervene in a mental health application before the High Court had just been received and it was agreed to consider this at a special meeting later in the week.

9. Communications Report

- 9.1 A report on communications and media was presented with a further briefing due for Commissioners later in the week as part of induction.

10. Any other business

- 10.1 There were no items of any other business

The meeting closed at 3.25pm.