EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THIRD MEETING HELD
ON WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 2018 AT 1.20 PM
IN EQUALITY HOUSE

PRESENT

Michael Wardlow        Chief Commissioner
Eileen Chan-Hu         
Deborah Donnelly       
Duane Farrell (part)   
Helen Ferguson         
Hazel Francey          
Billy Gamble           
Judith Gillespie       
Tom Hartley            
Jarlath Kearney        
Geraldine McGahey (part)
William McKee          
Robin Mullan           
David Rose             

APOLOGIES

Lesley Carroll        Deputy Chief Commissioner
Joe McVey             

IN ATTENDANCE

Evelyn Collins        Chief Executive
Keith Brown           Head of Corporate and Legal Services
Eileen Lavery         Head of Advice, Policy and Investigations
Lisa King             Director, Research and Investigations
Jacqui McKee          Director, Advice and Compliance (part)
Anne McKernan         Director of Legal Services
Darren McKinstry      Director, Policy and Strategic Engagement
Louise Conlon         Manager, Secretariat
Roisin Mallon         Senior Policy Officer (part)
Paul Noonan           Senior Policy Officer (part)

Christo McConnell      Boardroom Apprentice
1. Declarations of conflict of interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting  
   EC/18/05/01

The meeting considered the minutes of the one hundred and fifty second meeting held on Wednesday 25 April 2018. These were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

_Lee v Ashers Baking Company Ltd_: the Supreme Court hearing took place on 1 and 2 May 2018. A decision is expected later in the year.

*Section 75 report*: final preparations for publication were underway and this report would be published shortly.

*Key Inequalities in Employment*: The final Statement was published today.

*Review of Board Effectiveness*: the Audit and Risk Committee considered a progress report on agreed actions at its meeting on 22 May 2018.

_The order of the agenda changed as the meeting started earlier than scheduled._

4. Chief Commissioner’s Business  
   EC/18/05/08

The Chief Commissioner reported on recent engagements, including on a meeting, as part of the UK Independent Mechanism, with Ms Sarah Newton MP, Minister for Disability to discuss the UNCRPD report on the impact of welfare reform in the UK. He reported on a number of recent speaking engagements including delivering the Mary Seacole Annual Lecture at the Royal College of Nursing conference and speaking at a Women in Leadership conference at QUB.

There was a short discussion regarding the NIO appointment process for Commissioners.

5. Chief Executive’s Report  
   EC/18/05/08

The Chief Executive added details to her circulated report.
She reported on meetings with Dr Andrew McCormick, Director General of International Relations in NICS regarding Brexit. She also met with the Chief Executive of Newry and Mourne District Council regarding progress on its decision making in relation to a policy strategy and associated actions relevant to the naming of the Raymond McCreeesh Play park; and with Declan Billington, Chair Food and Drink Federation, to discuss issues relating to the employment of migrant workers post Brexit.

6. **Conflict of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest noted.

7. **Policy Issues**

- **UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Proposed List of Issues**
  EC/18/05/02

Roisin Mallon, Senior Policy Officer, presented the proposed issues for inclusion in the List of Issues the examination of the UK by the UN Committee on the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. She noted that the issues were discussed following the Gender equality policy positions agreed previously. She outlined plans for engagement with the women’s sector and DFC and the timetable leading up to the UK examination, which was to take place in early 2019. The deadline for submission to the List of Issues was 11 June 2018. Commissioners were asked to note the proposals for the List of Issues and proposed next steps.

Commissioners commended the paper and raised queries on engagement plans including at the examination stage. Commissioners suggested some amendments to text including in relation to domestic abuse/ Istanbul Convention; UN1325 and in relation to carers.

The Committee approved the proposed List of Issues and approach for engagement.

- **Race Equality: Briefing on Travellers**
  EC/18/05/03

Paul Noonan, Senior Policy Officer, presented this briefing paper, which updated on equality issues for Travellers in Northern Ireland.

Commissioners thanked staff for the very useful briefing paper, noting that Travellers faced significant and enduring inequalities across many areas of their lives. It was agreed to form a small time bound working group of
interested Commissioners to consider the issues facing Travellers and what action the Commission might take to help address these. There was a brief discussion about the types of complaints received by the Commission from Travellers. The Commission had asked that TEO set up a Traveller and Roma sub group as an offshoot of the Racial Equality Working group. A number of Commissioners expressed an interest in being on this working group and a date for the first meeting was to be circulated.

Commissioners noted the briefing paper.

8. Business Reporting

- Annual Report from Chair of Audit and Risk Committee EC/18/05/04

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a detailed summary of the main work undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee during 2017/18.

The Chair expressed thanks Committee members for the excellent attendance record. She also expressed thanks to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Services team for their support throughout the year noting that the information and guidance provided was excellent.

In the current year, she advised of one amendment to plans for internal audits – indicating that an audit on General Data Protection Regulation would be included in the audit plan this year.

The Commission noted the Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. The Chief Commissioner thanked the Chair and members of the Audit and Risk Committee for their work during the year.

- Business Plan and Budget 2018/2019 EC/18/05/05

Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive, presented the final Business Plan and budget allocation. She noted that TEO Board had now approved the Business Plan subject to the financial breakdown being received. Commissioners were asked to consider and approve the proposed business plan budget allocations.

The Commission approved the budget allocations as presented.

- Risk Management and Corporate Risk Register EC/18/05/06
Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services, presented the Risk Management Policy, which had been revised following a recent audit of risk management arrangements in the Corporate Governance Audit Report in February 2018.

The Commission approved the updated Risk Management Policy.

The Head of Corporate Services presented the Corporate Risk Register and Risk Assurance Map outlining the changes since it was last considered in November 2017, including the removal of the risks in relation to Reputation and Budgetary Control, as they had remained low for a period. He explained that the Risk Register was reviewed monthly by the Senior Management Team and was reviewed bi-annually by the Audit and Risk Committee and subsequently Commission.

There was a discussion about risk appetite and it was agreed that this should be the topic considered at the next Commission Strategic Discussion Session in August.

9. Other Matters for Commission Decision

- Paragraph 11 Investigation Report: Department for Communities EC/18/05/07

The Director, Research and Investigations, presented the final Report on the investigation under Paragraph 11, Schedule 9, NI Act 1998, to determine whether the Department for Communities had complied with its approved Equality Scheme in respect of funding decisions in relation to the Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme and the Community Halls Pilot Programme.

Commissioners were asked to consider and approve the Investigation Report, which had concluded that the Department had failed to comply with its Equality Scheme commitments in respect to both decision.

Following discussion of a number of aspects of the report, the Commission approved the final Investigation Report. The meeting discussed plans for its communication to DFC and subsequent publication.

10. Matters for Information

There were no matters for information

11. Minutes of Committee Meetings

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There were no Minutes for information.

12. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business discussed.

13. **Date of next meeting:** One hundred and fifty fourth Commission Meeting on Wednesday, 27 June 2018, at 1.30 pm in Equality House.

    The meeting closed at 3.10pm