

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY SECOND MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2022 AT 1.30 PM

PRESENT

Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner
June Best	
Hazel Francey	
Helen Ferguson	
Jarlath Kearney	
Deepa Mann-Kler	
Stephen Mathews	
Carmel McKinney	
Dawn Purvis	

APOLOGIES

Theresa Donaldson
Duane Farrell
Joe McVey
Katy Radford

IN ATTENDANCE

Evelyn Collins	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services
Louise Conlon	Director, Communications
Craig Gartley	Director, Finance and Corporate Services
Lisa King	Director, Investigations & Research
Roisin Mallon	Director, Dedicated Mechanism
Jacqui McKee	Director, Advice and Compliance
Darren McKinstry	Director, Policy and Strategic Engagement
Eoin O'Neill	Director, Legal Services
Glenda Doherty	Senior Policy and Research Manager

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the May Commission meeting which was taking place via Microsoft Teams. It was anticipated that the next meeting of the Commission would take place in Equality House.

She welcomed Eoin O'Neill newly appointed Director of Legal Services, to his first Commission meeting and congratulated him on his appointment.

2. Minutes of the one hundred and ninety first meeting held on 27 April 2022.

EC/22/05/01

The minutes of the one hundred and ninety first meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022 were **signed** as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Pg 3 Fair Employment Monitoring Report: this was publicised on 17 May 2022 and received a small amount of coverage.

Pg 3 Corporate Plan: This was submitted to The Executive Office on 4 May for approval.

4. Conflict of Interest

5. Policy Issues

- Loss of EU Funding: Proposed final policy recommendations

EC/22/05/02

Ms Glenda Doherty, Senior Policy and Research Officer, updated Commissioners on policy recommendations which had been revised since the draft considered by the Commission at the April Commission meeting. These amendments were made as a result of discussions at the expert seminar with key stakeholders on the research report and draft recommendations. She outlined the proposed next steps, including publishing and disseminating the report.

Commissioners commended staff on the development of these policy recommendations, noting that it was an excellent process

which engaged the relevant stakeholders and enabled the Commission to develop a strong set of recommendations for Government. There were queries on the publication of the research report and policy recommendations and it was confirmed that this was likely to be week commencing 7 June.

Commissioners **approved** the revised policy recommendations.

- Measuring Equality in NI: Proposed Framework

EC/22/05/03

Simon Hookham, Senior Research Officer, presented the finalised framework which will be used to produce a regular statement that measures Equality in Northern Ireland. He highlighted the consultation which had taken place, the proposed changes to the draft framework following consultation and outlined the proposed next steps.

Commissioners welcomed sight of the consultation responses and had no further comment on the proposals for the final framework and proposed next steps.

Commissioners **approved** the framework, as the basis for producing a Statement on Equality in Northern Ireland going forward.

6. Business Reporting

- Business Plan 2022/23

EC/22/05/04

The Chief Executive presented the final costed Business Plan 2022/23 based on the current notified allocation. Commissioners had considered an initial draft Business Plan at the January Commission meeting and a further draft last month. The budget had now been appended and Commissioners were asked to consider and approve. The Chief Executive also updated on a recent bid to TEO for additional resource and capital budget. In the event that this is successful, the allocation of resources would be amended. Commissioners will be kept informed.

Commissioners **approved** the costed draft Business Plan for 2022/23 for submitting to TEO for approval

- Risk Management and Corporate Risk Register EC/22/05/06

Corporate Risk Register EC/22/05/06a
Assurance Map EC/22/05/06b

Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services, presented an updated Corporate Risk Register. This had been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 11 May 2020. He advised that the risk rating remained high in relation to CR3 Budgetary control, due to ongoing political uncertainty and its potential impact on the 2022/23 and longer-term budget position. The ratings for CR1 and CR5 remained unchanged; the ratings for CR2 and CR4 had been reduced.

The Head of Corporate Services outlined the emerging risks relating to the replacement of Commissioners and the Chief Executive, following her decision to stand down in the autumn. These have been added to the Emerging risks register.

It was noted that there had been one data breach and details of this was provided.

Commissioners **approved** the updated Risk Management and Corporate Risk Register.

- ARC Chair's Report to the Commission EC/22/05/05

Neil Anderson, Deputy Chief Commissioner and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the ARC Chair's annual report to the Commission.

The Chair outlined a summary of the main work undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee during 2021/2022. He advised that the Committee worked well and that governance within the organisation was exemplary as demonstrated in recent outcomes of annual accounts audit and internal audits. He expressed thanks to the Chief Executive, the Head of Corporate Services, and the team for all the work and support they had given to the Committee over the previous twelve months. He thanked his fellow Committee members for their work during the year.

The Commission **noted** the annual report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

7. Other Matters for Commission Decision

- Education Authority Equality Scheme EC/22/05/07

Jacqui McKee, Director, Advice and Compliance, recapped on the approval process for Equality Schemes. She presented the paper which provided details of a revised scheme for the Education Authority for consideration, noting where it deviated from the Commission's model scheme. She recommended approval of the Education Authority's revised equality scheme

Commissioners **approved** the Equality Scheme as recommended.

- Updates to the Procedures for Complaints and Investigations EC/22/05/08

Lisa King, Director, Research and Investigations, advised Commissioners that the Statutory Duty Investigations Committee (SDIC) has considered and authorised the revisions to the Commission's Procedures for Complaints and Investigations and has referred to the Commission for approval.

Commissioners **approved** the revised Procedures as referred by the Statutory Duty Investigations Committee.

8. Chief Commissioner's Business

EC/22/05/09

The Chief Commissioner thanked those who had attended the Strategic Discussion session on outlined her meetings/engagements attended over the last month, including a meeting with the Shadow Minister of State for NI and the NI Children's Commissioner. She also spoke at a Rainbow Project event as part of LGBT+ Awareness Week "Take Your Seat" on 20 May 2022.

There was no firm indication of when the Secretary of State would be making the new Commissioner appointments, but it was understood that this would happen before the end of May.

Staff left the meeting

The Chief Commissioners updated Commissioners on the tender process for a recruitment agency to support the recruitment of a new

Chief Executive. She confirmed she would convene a tender panel to consider when tenders had been received.

Commissioners **noted** the update from the Chief Commissioner.

Staff rejoined the meeting

9. Chief Executive's Report

EC/22/05/10

The Chief Executive referred to her previously circulated report, providing an update on a number of engagements and meetings during the period. She highlighted a roundtable meeting with the Secretary of State and representatives of civic society, where the discussion focused on Government's approach to the Ireland/NI Protocol and its priorities post-election. She also updated on a meeting with members of CBI on cross border taxation arrangements post Brexit.

Commissioners **noted** the update from the Chief Executive's Report.

10. Matters for Information

- Submission from NIHRC/ECNI to inquiry by European EC/22/05/11
Scrutiny Committee on "Retained EU Law"

Commissioners **noted** the submission outlined above.

11. Minutes of Committee Meetings

- Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on
Wednesday 9 February 2022. EC/22/05/12

Commissioners **noted** the minutes outlined above.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

- 13. **Date of next meeting:** One hundred and ninety third Commission Meeting on **Wednesday 22 June 2022.**

Meeting ended at 3pm