

**EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**TWO HUNDRED AND TENTH COMMISSION MEETING**

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH 2024 AT 1.30 PM**

Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner
Maureen Brunt	(R)
Lisa Caldwell	
Siobhan Cullen	
Duane Farrell	
Ellen Finlay	
Monica Fitzpatrick	(R)
Colin Kennedy	
Stephen Mathews	
Carmel McKinney	(R)
Sheena McKinney	(R)
John McCallister	
Preeti Yellamaty	

**APOLOGIES**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Amanda Logan	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services
Louise Conlon	Director, Communications
Lisa King	Director, Research and Investigations
Roisin Mallon	Director, Dedicated Mechanism Unit
Jacqui McKee	Director, Advice and Compliance
Darren McKinstry	Director, Policy and Strategic Engagement
Eoin O'Neill	Director, Legal Services
Kathryn Barr	Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Strategic Engagement

## Introductions

The Chair welcomed Commissioners to the meeting.

The Chief Commissioner advised that update on the JR would be given under Any Other Business.

Commissioners were reminded to make sure their Register of Interests were up to date.

### 1. **Minutes of the two hundred and ninth meeting held on Wednesday 28 February 2024** EC/24/03/01

The Minutes of the two hundred and ninth meeting held on Wednesday 28 February 2024 were **signed** as a true and accurate record.

### 2. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### 3. **Conflict of Interests**

Duane Farrell had previously declared a conflict in relation to CLC JR and he would leave the meeting for this item.

### 4. **Policy Issues**

- The Impact of Brexit on Minority Ethnic and Migrant People: policy recommendations EC/24/03/02

Director, DMU, provided an overview on the final policy positions and recommendations outlined at Appendix A arising from the independent expert research paper on "*The Impact of Brexit on Minority Ethnic and Migrant People in Northern Ireland*". This follows the Commission's engagement with key stakeholders through an expert seminar and outreach events with stakeholders.

Commissioners welcomed the approach taken to the development of these recommendations. Some inconsistency in use of language in some of the recommendations was referred to, as were some areas where the language needed strengthened. Commissioners stated that it was important to raise awareness around the issues raised and in relation to the recommendations. It was noted that there had been ongoing actions in relation to this engagement including the provision of training for employers and recruitment agencies. It would be important to engage with TEO

officials on this matter considering the mid-term review of the Race Equality Strategy.

Following discussion, Commissioners **approved** the policy positions and recommendations as set out in Appendix A.

- Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland (MENI): update EC/24/03/03

Lisa King, Director, Research and Investigations updated Commissioners on the production and planned publication of reports on the agreed Areas of Life and their use going forward and updated on a recent meeting with TEO officials on the matter. She outlined details in the summary report, which contains the full data report for each of the six areas of life and the Framework report for measuring equality.

Commissioners welcomed the update noting how it was clear data gaps continue to be a major issue. It was agreed that this work provides an opportunity to raise the matter of significant data gaps with relevant officials and political representatives once again. It was important that the Commission continue to press for this to improved and it was suggested that the publication of the framework provided the ideal opportunity to do this. It was suggested that further narrative around this data would be useful and make it more accessible to the user.

Commissioners **noted** the update but asked the staff to further consider the publication of the framework in the context of the following issue.

- Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland:  
Participation in Public Life EC/24/03/04

Lisa King, Director, Research and Investigations drew attention to the briefing paper in respect equality of opportunity in Participation in Public Life. This was the first of a series of briefings emanating from MENI.

Whilst welcoming the work to date, the meeting agreed that it would be useful to take this work to the next level and to provide a narrative around the data. The paper provided an opportunity to reach a wider audience and was an important opportunity to communicate some Commission messages around the importance of diversity in public life, the application of the merit principle in public life and the importance of having a Commissioner for Public Appointments. Again, it was an opportunity to promote the messages around the absence of data in this area.

Following discussion, Commissioners **noted** the information provided and asked staff to consider the Commissioner comments to devise a communications plan in relation to this briefing paper. A paper addressing

the issues raised would be prepared for the April meeting.

- Childcare and early learning: updated policy positions EC/24/03/05

Darren McKinstry, Director, PPSE outlined the finalised Childcare and Early Learning position paper following the discussion at the previous Commission meeting. The paper had been updated to include several wider existing Commission positions in respect to early education. Engagement will continue with key stakeholders and the position paper will be communicated externally.

Commissioners welcomed the updated paper noting that it had been strengthened in places and now encapsulated the importance of early education. Commissioners **noted** the updated paper which will form the basis for our wider engagement.

## 5. Business Reporting

- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans EC/24/03/06

Louise Conlon, Director, Communications updated Commissioners on the initial working draft plan for the Commission's 25 years anniversary engagements, highlighting that the Anniversary plans commenced with a very successful Women in Northern Ireland conference. The Chief Commissioner had followed this with engagements in Washington and New York over the last couple of weeks. Ms Conlon provided an outline of initial proposals which would run through the business year. She advised that the programme would be further developed.

Commissioners who attended the first event commended officials on the excellent women's event, noting it was an excellent start to the programme of events. They were aware that the programme was ambitious and offered their help through the year. Commissioners welcomed the innovation in reaching a range of audiences and areas. It was mentioned that it would be useful to do something on carers and emphasised the importance of engaging young people.

Following discussion, Commissioners **noted** the plan and looked forward to attending some of the events.

## 6. Other Matters for Commission Decision

No matters arising for Commission decision.

## 7. Chief Commissioner's Business

EC/24/03/07

Commissioners **noted** the latest update.

### Meetings/Engagements

The Chief Commissioner advised that a special meeting would be required to consider an intervention in respect to the Legacy Act. An email would issue with dates after the meeting. The meeting would be online to maximise attendance.

The Chief Commissioner outlined the meetings/engagements she had attended since the March Commission meeting including a meeting with the Minister for Finance and a speaking engagement at the North West Migrant's Forum Race Equality Awards and the Soroptimist International event.

The Chief Commissioner updated on successful trip, along with the Director, DMU to the Annual St Patricks Day celebrations in Washington and outlined details of the events/meetings attended including the Women and Peacebuilding, British Embassy Annual St Patrick's Day Breakfast; Irish Ambassador St Patrick's Reception; Special Envoy's reception; NI Bureau breakfast and the Ireland Funds gala dinner. She also spoke at the launch of the Commission's women and Brexit report which was very well attended.

The Chief Commissioner and Commissioners expressed thanks to Amanda for her work in the role of Chief Executive over the past eight months and wished her every success for the future and in her new role.

Commissioners **noted** the Chief Commissioners Report.

## 8. Chief Executive's Report

EC/24/03/08

Amanda Logan, Chief Executive provided further detail to her report. This included providing an update on her recent engagement with TEO on several issues including budget and IT service provision. She provided an update on several ongoing issues.

The Chief Executive advised that she will be leaving the Commission at Easter and advised that Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services has agreed to take on the role of CEO and Accounting Officer whilst the Commission recruits a new Chief Executive Officer.

She expressed her sincere gratitude to the Board and the Commission for all the support received during her tenure and wished the Commission well for the future.

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

## 9. Matters for Information

- Submission on the Data Protection and Digital information Bill EC/24/03/09

Commissioners emphasised the importance of consultation responses being based on agreed policy positions, and of Commissioner approval being sought for any new or updated positions.

Commissioners agreed with the contents of the paper.

- Response to Department for Infrastructure's Consultation on Water and Sewerage Charges EC/24/03/10

Commissioners **noted** the matters outlined above for information.

## 10. Any Other Business

[Duane Farrell left the meeting]

### CLC JR

The Solicitor to the Commission provided an update in respect to this Judicial Review noting that consideration was being given to the wording of a Court Order, which would affect a settlement of the Applicant's claim against the Commission. The Chief Commissioner and Deputy Chief Commissioner would continue to be involved in the process and would take the final decision in respect to concluding this matter.

Commissioners **noted** the update.

Chief Executive Recruitment: Officers left the room except for the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Services.

11. **Date of next meeting:** Two Hundred and eleventh Commission Meeting on **Wednesday, 24 April 2024, at 1.30 pm** in Equality House.

**The meeting ended at 3pm**

**Signed:**



**Date:** 24 April 2024