

THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY SIXTH MEETING OF
THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 1.30pm

Equality House

PRESENT:

Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner
Maureen Brunt	(R)
Lisa Caldwell	
Siobhan Cullen	
Ellen Finlay	
Monica Fitzpatrick	
Colin Kennedy	
Nazia Latif	
Stephen Mathews	
Jim McCooe	
John McAllister	
Preeti Yellamaty	

APOLOGIES:

Duane Farrell
Harry Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Louise Conlon	Chief Executive
Frances Fleming	Director of Communications (part of)
Craig Gartley	Director of Finance & Corporate Services (part of)
Alden Henderson	Director of Advice and Compliance (part of)
Lisa King	Director of Policy and Research (R)
Kelly McGinley	Communications Manager
Jacqui McKee	Director of Projects (part of)
Ciaran Trainor	Equality Development Manager (Information & Guidance) (part of)

1. Introduction

The Chief Commissioner thanked everyone for attending the meeting and welcomed those joining online. The Chief Commissioner also noted condolences to Commissioner Robinson following a family bereavement.

2. Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interests declared.

3. Minutes of the two hundred and twenty fifth meeting held on Wednesday 24 September 2025

EC/25/09/01

The minutes of the two hundred and twenty fifth meeting held on Wednesday 24 September 2025 were signed as a true and accurate record. It was confirmed that an amendment had been included.

4. Actions from previous meeting

EC/25/09/02

The actions from the previous meeting were noted.

5. Policy Issues

- For Women Scotland

EC/25/09/03

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive and Jacqui McKee, Director of Projects, updated Commissioners on the Road Map and related work following the For Women Scotland judgment.

Commissioners were advised that steps 1-3 of the Road Map have now been completed. Commissioners had been provided with the Pre Action Protocol responses and a table detailing the consultation responses received. These are strictly confidential and for Commissioner consideration to enable informed decision making regarding the next steps.

Commissioners were advised that before proceeding to step 4, which outlines how the Commission would apply to the High Court in Northern Ireland for a Declaration to resolve the identified legal uncertainties, the Commission must carefully review all PAP and consultation responses to inform its next actions. They were also reminded that Steps 5 and 6 of the

Roadmap are dependent on the Commission applying to the High Court in NI as outlined above.

The Chief Commissioner updated on the Secretary of State's appeal in the case Dillon and others, the outcome of which may have a bearing on this matter.

Following discussion Commissioners **agreed** to hold a special Commission meeting on Wednesday 29 October at 2pm, this would allow time to fully consider all responses received. A paper on the themes arising from the consultation responses will also be provided. A decision on whether to proceed to Step 4 as outlined in the Road Map would then be considered at this meeting.

6. Business Reporting

- Business Plan Progress Report

EC/25/09/04

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive presented an overview of the new style progress report, noting this is a formal framework with clearer goals and SMART measures. She updated on progress across the work of the Commission noting that several areas were behind target, in the main due to resource issues and as a result of unexpected work areas such as For Women Scotland and ongoing Judicial Review in respect to the NI budget. A balanced scorecard for strategic reporting, focusing on six areas to give a clearer, long-term view of performance was presented as an initial draft and Commissioner comment was welcome.

While Commissioners acknowledged the benefits of the longer-term scorecard for managing objectives and gaining a clearer understanding of performance, and recognised that the approach is still developing, it was agreed that further work is needed to make the scorecard simpler and more streamlined.

Commissioners discussed in detail the impact of the lack of resources on staffing and the additional issues that have arisen outside the Business Plan priorities. They agreed that given the challenges it is likely this year's business plan will have more red and amber than in previous years. There was a discussion on whether the Business Plan needed reviewed and resubmitted but in the end, it was concluded that it was probably too late in the year to do this, and this could be considered during the development of the next business plan.

Commissioners **noted** the progress against quarterly performance measures for delivery of the Business Plan's Key actions and the observations made.

- Finance Report: 1 April – 30 September 2025

EC/25/09/05

Craig Gartley, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, outlined the overall financial position at 30 September 2025, noting that the Commission's opening budget allocation has been increased through revised allocations to account for the 2024 pay award as well as the employers national insurance increases post June Monitoring. The Commission is working towards a current budget (inclusive of DMU funding) of £6,290k.

- 45% of the total Resource budget has been spent. The Commission is forecasting as at 30th September a resource budget pressure of £244k which aligns to its October Monitoring round submission.
- These resource pressures align to specific areas of work such as legal support for Judicial Reviews, Teacher Exemption and Legal Funding Committee support.
- Bids for these resource pressures have been included in TEO's October Monitoring Round, no outcome has been received.
- As a contingency and to mitigate the impact of not being successful in our October monitoring round submission's the Commission has identified potential areas across the work programme for reductions in conjunction with appropriate vacancy management processes.

Commissioners **noted** the financial position and the associated risks, and **agreed** the importance of ongoing monitoring and the mitigations identified.

- Communications Report

EC/25/09/06

Frances Fleming, Director of Communications, presented the report of the communications work undertaken for the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2025. This included publicity of legal cases, general press releases, blogs, social media, website, partnerships and events.

Commissioners were advised that the new website - subject to internal approvals, will be launched in the next few weeks. Commissioners also discussed which social media channels were most beneficial for the Commission and how these might be utilised going forward.

Commissioners **noted** the update for the period.

7. Reports from Committees

ARAC Committee

The Chair, Neil Anderson, updated on recent business considered by the ARAC Committee at its annual in person meeting on 15 October 2025. Following discussion at the meeting, it was noted that it would be useful to have a separate discussion with Commissioners regarding risk and a date would be identified shortly.

- ARAC Minutes of 13 August 2025 EC/25/09/07

Commissioners **noted** the oral update on the ARAC Committee and the Minutes outlined above.

8. Chief Commissioner's Business

The Chief Commissioner provided an update on a number of recent engagements since the last Commission. Together with the Chief Executive, the Chief Commissioner attended the Supreme Court hearing on Dillon and others. The Chief Commissioner provided an update on proceedings during the hearing and possible impact this case might have in relation to the scope of Article 2 and the Commission's work going forward.

The Chief Commissioner also attended a workshop at Ulster University to consider medium and long-term responses to the recent upsurge in attacks on people of minority ethnic background and she also attended "Don't Hate Debate" at the Crescent Arts Centre.

The Chief Commissioner attended a number of other meetings, including the ALB Forum at Stormont, an introductory meeting with the new Commissioner for Public Appointments Claire Keatinge and a meeting with the Romanian Ambassador in London, Laura Popescu, in Equality House.

The Chief Commissioner also advised Commissioners of possible publicity or coverage around the final report relating to Ulster boxing.

Commissioners were asked to advise if they are available to attend the three Commission meeting in Dublin on 13 November

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

9. Chief Executive Report

EC/25/08/08

The Chief Executive presented her previously circulated report. She provided an update on CLC Judicial Review, the quarterly TEO partnership meeting. She advised that the Commission had received approval for the 2024 and 2025 pay awards and these would be paid in the October Salaries.

A further update on accommodation was provided including the options to accommodate staff from three language and identity bodies in Equality House.

An update was also provided in relation to other business areas including key issues. During the discussion it was suggested that consideration should be given to seeking a briefing by the Rabble Collective at a strategic session on race for Commissioners. It was agreed that this would be helpful.

Commissioners **noted** the update.

- 10. Date of next meeting:** Two hundred and twenty seventh Commission Meeting on **Wednesday 26 November 2025**, in Equality House.

Meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Signed:



Signed: 26 November 2025