

**THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH MEETING OF  
THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 1.45 PM  
EQUALITY HOUSE**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive  
Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services  
Lisa King Director, Research and Investigations (R)  
Roisin Mallon Director, Dedicated Mechanism Unit  
Jacqui McKee Director, Advice and Compliance (R)  
Darren McKinstry Director, Policy and Strategic Engagement  
Frances Fleming Interim Director of Communications  
Alden Henderson Director, Advice and Compliance

**1. Introduction**

The Chief Commissioner welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Commissioners for joining the meeting with the LRA held earlier in the day.

2. **Apologies**

There were no apologies received.

3. **Minutes of the two hundred and eighteenth meeting EC/25/02/01**

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 22 January 2025 were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered on the agenda.

5. **Conflict of Interest**

There were no conflicts declared.

6. **Policy Issues**

- **Research Report Examining the Impact of the Loss of EU Funding on Section 75 Equality Groups in Northern Ireland  
EC/25/02/02**

Roisin Mallon, Director DMU, presented this research report which examined the impact of the loss of EU funding on Section 75 equality groups in Northern Ireland. The report included concerns that the rollout of the Shared Prosperity Fund, had particularly impacted on projects for people with disabilities, young people, and women. Several next steps included engagement with relevant stakeholders, including relevant departments. Following this engagement, draft policy recommendations would be presented to the Commission for approval.

Commissioners welcomed the useful report, noting that it captured well the impact of the transition from EU funding to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, including the necessity for enhanced inter-departmental engagement and coordination. Commissioners acknowledged the recommendation for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to be designated under Section 75. It was confirmed that the Commission had previously requested this designation. This matter will be pursued with the current Secretary of State.

It was noted that the research report would benefit from additional efforts to enhance its accessibility for stakeholders to ensure the findings were communicated effectively. It was also crucial to ensure that our recommendations are properly implemented and followed up.

Commissioners **noted** the Report and its recommendations.

## 7. **Business Reporting**

### - **Performance Management Internal Audit Report EC/25/02/03**

Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services, presented this internal audit report on performance management, which had been discussed at the last meeting of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. It was deemed useful for the Commission to review, as it directly impacts on how performance was reported to the Commission. He outlined the planned next steps, including implementing a balanced scorecard approach and further developing Key Performance Indicators.

The Commissioners appreciated the opportunity to review the report, as effective performance measurement and reporting was important to enable the Board to maintain oversight of performance. They also noted the Satisfactory rating and the timing issue with the reporting to the TEO that needs to be addressed and discussed, the balanced scorecard techniques and the establishment of key performance indicators.

Commissioners **noted** the assurance report.

- **Draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028** **EC/25/02/04**
- **Draft Business Plan 2025-2026** **EC/25/02/05**

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive, presented the draft Corporate Plan noting the changes made, following feedback from the consultation. The revised plan was attached for Commissioners' information.

Commissioners had reviewed the feedback obtained during the consultation process and observed that the number of responses was low, indicating a need for improvements in future consultations.

They noted concerns regarding Section 75 investigations generally; It was noted that actions in relation to this are expected to be included in the Business Plan moving forward.

The Commissioners agreed on the necessity of revising the phrasing of the objectives in the Corporate Plan to accurately represent the Commission's influence and control over specific outcomes. After thorough discussion, it was agreed that these amendments would be made and a further draft circulated via email for approval before submission to TEO.

Regarding the draft Business Plan, similar comments were applicable. With the aforementioned amendments to the overall objectives, it may also be submitted as a working draft. A costed Plan will be reviewed at the next meeting, allowing for further refinements if necessary.

It has been **agreed** that amendments will be made to the Plans as discussed. Following email approval from the Commissioners, the amended Plans will be submitted to the Executive Office for final approval. Additionally, a working draft of the Business Plan may be provided to update TEO on the progress.

## 8. Other Matters for Commission Decision

### - **Draft Statutory Investigations Committee Terms of Reference** **EC/25/02/06**

Lisa King presented the draft Statutory Duty Investigations Committee Terms of Reference which Commissioners were asked to review and approve.

Commissioners **approved** the Terms of Reference.

### - **Draft Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference (ARAC)**

**EC/25/02/07**

Keith Brown presented the draft Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference which Commissioners were asked to review and approve.

Commissioners **approved** the Terms of Reference.

## 9. Chief Commissioners Business

The Chief Commissioner thanked the Commissioners for completing the Boardroom Effectiveness Survey noting that findings would be presented at the next meeting.

The Chief Commissioner provided an update regarding a recent visit, in conjunction with NIHRC, to Westminster. This included an event focussing on Article 2 protections noting that this was well attended. Several side meetings took place, including with Lord Carlisle, Tonia Antoniazzi (Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee), and Robin Swann, MP.

She also reported on a visit to Brussels which included an Article 2 event hosted by the Office of the NI Executive. This was well attended, and feedback was positive. One-to-one meetings were conducted with several Members of the European Parliament. Meetings also took place with Ireland's Deputy Representative to the European Union with the Chair and officers of EQUINET.

The Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive attended a meeting with Equality and Human Rights Bodies from the UK and Ireland, facilitating useful information exchange and identifying opportunities for knowledge sharing.

The Chief Commissioner had chaired a roundtable with African and Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland representatives at Equality House. The discussion was useful and interesting.

## 10. Chief Executive's Report

**EC/25/02/08**

The Chief Executive added detail to her previously circulated report, including providing an update on the judicial review bought by the Children's Law Centre. She reported that there are currently two ongoing external recruitment exercises for a Senior Policy and Research Officer and another temporary post for a Communications Officer.

A Commissioner noted the update on housing and mentioned the minister's statement on housing intimidation points and further consideration would be given to this matter.

Commissioners **noted** the Report.

**11. Matters for Information**

**EC/25/02/08a**

The Director of Advice and Compliance presented a report on the use of the Commission's legal powers and the opportunity to maximise the Commission's impact through 'voluntary' engagement under the Race Relations Order 1997. Detail was provided on recent action taken against an estate agency to address discriminatory practices which resulted in the agency agreeing to undertake training and comply with the Commission's recommendations.

Commissioners noted the update.

**12. Minutes of Committee Meetings**

**EC/25/02/09**

**- SDIC Meeting held on 4 December 2024**

Commissioners noted the minutes of the SDIC meeting held on 4 December 2024.

**13. Any Other business**

- 14. Date of next meeting:** Two hundred and twentieth Commission Meeting on **Wednesday 26 March 2025, at 1.30 pm** in Equality House.

**The meeting ended at 4.15 pm**

**Signed:**



**Date:** 26 March 2025