

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

Wednesday 27 August 2025 at 3pm

CLIFTON HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner
Maureen Brunt	
Lisa Caldwell	
Siobhan Cullen	
Duane Farrell	
Colin Kennedy	
Nazia Latif	
Jim McCooe	
John McAllister	
Harry Robinson	
Preeti Yellamaty	

APOLOGIES:

Ellen Finlay
Monica Fitzpatrick
Stephen Mathews

IN ATTENDANCE:

Louise Conlon	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services
Kelly McGinley	Communications Manager

1. Introduction

The Chief Commissioner thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted condolences to Commissioner Fitzpatrick following a family bereavement.

2. Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interests declared.

3. Minutes of the two hundred and twenty third meeting held on Wednesday 25 June 2025

EC/25/07/01

The minutes of the two hundred and twenty third meeting held on Wednesday 25 June 2025 were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Actions from previous meeting

EC/25/07/02

The actions from the previous meeting were agreed.

5. Policy Issues

- Anti-Poverty Strategy draft response

EC/25/07/03

Chris Jenkins, Senior Policy Officer presented an overview of the draft consultation response to the Anti-Poverty Strategy. This included an analysis of the draft strategy, concerns regarding the lack of specific and targeted actions to address poverty experienced across the Section 75 groups and recommendations on actions required more broadly.

Commissioners welcomed the paper noting that it was an important response. Commissioners made several points in relation to tone in parts of the response. Despite reservations about the proposed strategy regarding lack of targets, specific actions, and resourcing, Commissioners agreed that the draft strategy should not be withdrawn as reflected in the paper.

There was a discussion regarding the current position of 'socio-economic status' as a protected ground under equality law and it was noted that the Commission's previous position on this matter needed revisited in the future. Commissioners discussed the need to include the Commission's position on academic selection in the response and that further consideration should be given to including context and recommendations on other areas, such as health and justice.

Commissioners were also updated on the plans for engagement with a range of stakeholders on the response before the consultation closes on 19 September.

Commissioners **approved** the consultation paper with amendments as discussed.

- Draft Annual Report on Implementation of Article 2 EC/25/07/04

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive introduced Edel Quinn, Senior Policy Officer to the Board. She thanked Edel for taking the lead on the annual report as her first task and for delivering the report.

Edel Quinn, Senior Policy Officer presented an overview of the draft Annual Report 2024-2025. The report has been written in accordance with the Commission and the NIHRC's mandate, to oversee and monitor the UK Government's commitment on rights and equality in Northern Ireland after EU withdrawal and report to the Secretary of State.

Commissioners were advised that the draft Annual Report highlights the Article 2 obligations that shaped the work of two Commissions in 2024-2025. The report outlines key developments in equality and human rights over the reporting period and sets out the Commissions' recommendations relating to Article 2 as of 31 March 2025.

Commissioners discussed the length and breadth of the report and its recommendations. Commissioners acknowledged the amount of work done to complete the report and thanked staff for their effort. The Chief Executive noted that significant work had went into reducing the volume of recommendations this year and gave a commitment to review the approach for next year's report to ensure that it is streamlined.

Commissioners **approved** the draft ECNI/NIHRC Annual Report 2024-2025 on the implementation of Windsor Framework Article 2.

6. Business Reporting

- Finance Report: 1 April 25 – 31 July 2025 EC/25/07/05

Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services provided Commissioners with an update on the first quarter outturn for the 2025/26 financial year and up to 31 July.

Commissioners were advised that the opening budget allocation has been increased through revised allocations and following notification of the June monitoring round.

Mr Brown advised that further bids would be made for additional funding and that plans were in place to deliver a range of projects should the funding be made available.

Commissioners **noted** the financial position as at 31 July 2025.

- Revised ARAC Terms of Reference EC/25/07/06

Keith Brown, Head of Corporate Services advised that the ARAC Terms of Reference were updated and presented at the ARAC Committee on 7 May 2025. He identified a number of amendments suggested by the Committee.

Commissioners **approved** the Revised ARAC Terms of Reference and work programme.

7. Other Matters for Information

Reports from Committees

- Minutes of ARAC Committee Meeting EC/25/07/07
held on 7 May 2025
- Minutes of ARAC Committee Special Meeting EC/25/07/08
held on 24 June 2025

Commissioners **noted** the ARAC Minutes outlined above.

ARAC August oral report

Commissioner Neil Anderson, Chair, ARAC Committee provided an update on the recent meeting held on 13 August 2025, noting that the Committee had formally accepted the Final Report to those Charged with Governance and that the Committee were pleased with the positive report. He expressed thanks to staff for the work involved.

Commissioners thanked the Chair for his update.

8. Chief Commissioner's Business

EC/25/07/09

The Chief Commissioner provided an update on a number of recent engagements since the last Commission. She noted the media briefing and interviews she completed on 27 June to launch the Commission's legal paper and roadmap in response to the Supreme Court Judgment 'For Women

Scotland v The Scottish Ministers. She met with Danny Donnelly MLA on the Proposed UNCRPD Bill at Stormont and had a useful meeting with Martin McDonagh regarding members of the Traveller Community applying for positions on public bodies.

The Chief Commissioner also participated in an anti-poverty strategy discussion and completed media interviews in publicity around the Donaldson v Fraser Partners Ltd disability and age discrimination case.

The Chief Commissioner asked Commissioners to note the draft dates that were circulated and advised that Commissioner Harry Robinson is to join the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Commissioners **noted** the update.

9. Chief Executive Report

EC/25/07/10

The Chief Executive presented her previously circulated report. She provided an update regarding preparations for the Legacy Judicial Review. An update was also provided on CLC Judicial Review and the For Women Scotland judgment and Commission roadmap. A potential Judicial Review against the Commission in relation to transgender guidance was also discussed.

Update was provided on a number of other business issues including the approval of the Corporate and Business plans, IT systems procurement and accommodation in Equality House. The Chief Executive also outlined some key events that had taken place during the period.

Commissioners **noted** the update.

10. Any Other Business

None

11. Date of next meeting: **Wednesday 24 September 2025**, in Equality House.

Meeting concluded at 4pm

Signed:



Date: 24 Sept 2025