

THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH MEETING OF
THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 1.30PM

Equality House

PRESENT:

Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner
Maureen Brunt	
Lisa Caldwell	
Siobhan Cullen	
Kevin Doherty	
Ellen Finlay	
Colin Kennedy	
Nazia Latif	
Stephen Mathews	
Jim McCooe	
Preeti Yellamaty	

APOLOGIES:

Monica Fitzpatrick
Harry Robinson
John McAllister

IN ATTENDANCE:

Louise Conlon	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services
Frances Fleming	Temporary Director of Communications (part of)
Alden Henderson	Director of Advice and Compliance (part of)
Simon Hookham	Senior Research Officer (part of)
Lisa King	Director, Policy and Research
Kelly McGinley	Communications Manager
Paul Noonan	Senior Policy Officer (part of)

1. Introduction

The Chief Commissioner commenced the board meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She stated that Commissioner Duane Farrell's term of office concluded on 20 February 2026. There was some early uncertainty regarding the exact date, and Duane's final Commission meeting occurred in February.

Commissioners thanked Duane for his decade of dedication and support to the Commission, noting that his important contributions had been appreciated.

The Chief Commissioner, Commissioners and staff also welcomed newly appointed Commissioner, Kevin Doherty, to his first meeting.

2. Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the two hundred and twenty ninth meeting held on Wednesday 25 February 2026

EC/26/03/01

The above minutes were **agreed** and signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Actions from previous meeting

EC/26/03/02

The actions from the previous meeting were noted.

5. Policy Issues

Race Policy Positions: Tackling Racism, Advancing Race Equality

EC/26/03/03

Lisa King, Director of Policy and Research, presented a draft policy document on race entitled 'Tackling racism and advancing race equality' and outlined the proposed next steps. Commissioners were advised that this was an update and refresh of the Commission's race policy positions and recommendations. It was noted that TEO's consultation on the Draft Framework for Race Relations had just been published and these recommendations will inform the Commission's response. The next steps include gathering commissioner feedback on the draft, further discussion with stakeholders and presentation of final positions to the next Commission for approval.

It was noted that this will be a core piece of policy work over the next year and that a supporting stakeholder engagement and communications plan has been developed and comments welcome on this.

[Preeti Yellamaty joined the meeting]

Commissioners welcomed the draft paper, emphasising that addressing the issues highlighted by recent racist protests is essential to fulfilling the Commission's remit to promote race equality. This area of work is particularly significant at this time.

Commissioners provided feedback and requested that some of the recommendations be revised as they were broad in scope and that the language used could be stronger in places. Issues including education, displays of racist graffiti and census data were also raised during the discussion.

The policy paper would be updated to reflect the Commissioner's input and any further comments in writing were welcome. An updated version of the policy document will be presented at the next Commission meeting.

6. Other Matters for Commission Decision

- Fair Employment Monitoring Report 2024 EC/26/03/04

Simon Hookham, Senior Research Officer presented the key findings from the Fair Employment Monitoring Report (2024), a profile of the Northern Ireland monitored workforce, and outlined the proposed next steps for publishing the data. The key findings and associated materials will be made publicly available following the Commission meeting. The report will be published with an accompanying press notice.

Commissioners discussed the report's findings and the continuing increase in the 'Non-Determined' category, the significance of this and the use of the residuary method. The importance and purpose of this work was raised and how it is perceived by both employers and the younger generations entering the workforce was also discussed. It was **agreed** that a report would be brought to Commission during the current year on how FETO might be better aligned to cultural and demographic changes. Commissioners **noted** the Monitoring Report and its findings, as well as the planned dissemination of the data.

7. Business Reporting

- Initial Draft Business Plan 2026/27

EC/26/03/05

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive, presented a further draft Business Plan 26/27 incorporating Commissioner comments on the previous draft which was presented at the February meeting. She noted that the plan has been prepared in the absence of a confirmed budget.

Commissioners discussed the outworkings coming from the CLC judgment and the considerable piece of work on Section 75 needed over the coming year. Commissioners discussed the uncertainty around the budget allocation and impact this may have on workstreams and plans.

Commissioners considered and **approved** the plan for submission to TEO as an uncoded working draft business plan.

- Draft Terms of Reference for ECNI Review

EC/26/03/06

Louise Conlon, Chief Executive outlined the draft Terms of Reference provided by TEO officials for a review of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Following consideration of the draft TOR, concerns were raised regarding several issues including the composition of the steering group, outcomes for the public, the need for maintaining independence and benchmarking against the EU Standards for Equality Bodies.

Commissioners **agreed** that the Chief Executive would consolidate feedback and revert to officials and an updated draft would be shared with Commissioners.

8. Reports from Committees

- SDIC Committee Meeting held on 11 March 2026

The Committee Chair, Siobhan Cullen, updated on recent business considered by the Committee at the meeting held on 11 March 2026.

She presented the updated Terms of Reference for this committee which had been reviewed and agreed by the Committee. A correction to the composition was noted.

Commissioners agreed the Terms of Reference.

- SDIC Minutes of 3 December 2025

EC/26/03/07

Commissioners **noted** the oral update on the SDIC Committee and the minutes outlined above.

9. Chief Commissioner's Business

EC/26/03/08

The Chief Commissioner provided an update on a number of recent engagements since the last Commission. These included attending the Northern Ireland Leadership and Governance Conference, the British Irish Inter Governmental St Patrick's Day Reception, TEO International Women's Day "Give to Gain" and a British Irish Association dinner.

The Chief Commissioner also met with the Civil Service Commissioners Meeting and visited Ulster Supported Employment Limited.

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

10. Chief Executive Report

EC/26/03/09

The Chief Executive presented her previously circulated report. This included an update in relation to accommodation planning and capital funding for furniture.

The Chief Executive also updated on a number of other business areas including judgment in the Dillon and Others case which is expected to be delivered by the Supreme Court within the next short while.

Commissioners **noted** the update.

11. Date of next meeting: Two hundred and thirty first Commission Meeting on Wednesday 22 April 2026 at 1.30 pm.

Meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed:



Dated: 22 April 2026