

Minutes
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
49th Ordinary Plenary Meeting
1 June 2021

Present:

- Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner (SG)
- Heydi Foster Breslin (HFB)
- Jim Clarken (JC)
- Dr Frank Conaty (FC)
- Prof Caroline Fennell (CF)
- Michael Finucane (MF)
- Tony Geoghegan (TG)
- Adam Harris (AH)
- Prof Kathleen Lynch (KL)
- Salome Mbugua (SM)
- Dr Rosaleen McDonagh (RMcD)
- Sunniva McDonagh SC (SMcD)
- Dr Lucy Michael (LM)
- Prof Ray Murphy (RM)
- Colm O'Dwyer SC (COD)

In attendance:

- Laurence Bond, Director (LB)
- Dr Nusha Yonkova, Head of Anti-Human Trafficking – Item 3.1
- Dr Iris Elliott, Head of Policy and Research – Items 4.1, 7.1
- Naomi Kennan, Policy and Research Officer – Item 4.1
- Kieran Timmons, Policy and Research Officer – Item 7.1
- Niall Kelly, Head of Corporate Services (NK) – Items 5.1, 6.1
- Michael O' Neill, Head of Legal (MON) - Items 8.1, 9.1
- Muireann Ní Thuairisg, Minute Taker

The 49th Ordinary Plenary Meeting of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission took place between 9:30am-4:20pm on 1 June 2021 by video conference.

1.1 Apologies, Quorum and Declaration of Interest

No apologies were noted. SMcD, HFB and AH declared an interest in relation to [REDACTED]

1.2 Closed session for Members

It was agreed that the list of meetings would be circulated again, as presented in the Director's report. Further plans for induction will be revisited in light of the strategic planning process.

1.3 Draft Minutes – 48th Ordinary Plenary Meeting – 20 April 2021

The draft minutes of the 48th Ordinary Plenary meeting held on 20 April 2021, were approved, proposed by RM and seconded by KL.

1.4 Matters arising, not otherwise dealt with on the Agenda

SG requested to discuss the selection of nominations to external bodies under Item 1.5 Chief Commissioner Update.



There were no other matters arising.

1.5 (a) Selection Process

An updated memo outlining a process for the selection of nominations to external bodies was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

Following discussion it was agreed that SG would revise the paper to take account of members' comments to provide for a secret ballot, and will circulate the revised paper for final sign off.

1.5 (b) Chief Commissioner Update

The Chief Commissioner's report was taken as read.

Members requested advance notice of ministerial meetings and inclusion of more information on the outcome of these meetings in future updates from the Chief Commissioner.

On key correspondence SG addressed a number of issues regarding acknowledgements, responses issued and potential follow up.

FC suggested that a rolling list of action points arising from Commission meetings be prepared and included with Commission papers.

2.1 Committee Updates

(a) Casework Committee

Update notes on the Casework Committee meetings of 12 and 24 May were taken as read and COD briefed members on the key points considered by the Committee.

It was confirmed that a submission would be made to the CoE Council of Ministers on the issues arising from the ECtHR judgement in the *Louise O'Keefe* case.

(b) Policy and Research Committee

An update note on the Policy and Research Committee of 17 May was taken as read and LM briefed members on the key points considered by the Committee.

A number of members suggested that the Commission should establish a Section 18 Advisory Committee on Anti-Racism. SG indicated that any consideration of S18 Committees should be part of the Commission's upcoming strategy discussions where all suggestions could be considered equally.

(c) Disability Advisory Committee

An update note on the Disability Advisory Committee meeting of 28 April was taken as read and FC briefed members on the key points from the meeting. He noted in particular the Committee's concern that Ireland's examination by the UN CRPD Committee will not take place for a number of years, given the existing backlog in the work of the Committee.

SG confirmed that she intended to write to the Minister on this matter, proposing that Government report annually to the Oireachtas on progress in implementing CRPD. Following discussion it was agreed to additionally stress the need to ratify the Optional Protocol and to promote and support DPOs.

SG noted that a proposal to fill two vacant positions on the Committee will be brought to the July meeting of the Commission as well as a proposal to extend DAC.

3.1 Anti-Trafficking Update

Dr Nusha Yonkova, Head of Anti-Human Trafficking presented on the work of the Anti-Trafficking team to date, noted key anti-trafficking policy issues in Ireland and key upcoming reporting and other planned work.

Members welcomed the presentation and the strong progress made to date in establishing the Commission's Rapporteur role. Members emphasised the need to prioritise achieving domestic policy impact from this work.

It was agreed that the team will follow up on members' suggestions to engage with the Bar Council Human Rights Committee and also with the Criminal Assets Bureau

4.1 European Social Committee Submission

Members discussed a draft Submission to the CoE European Social Committee. The submission will be finalised taking account of the feedback from the Commission and will be submitted before the deadline of 30th June 2021.

Arising from the discussion, it was noted that a draft policy paper on enshrining socio-economic rights in the Constitution would be tabled for discussion at the July meeting of the Commission.

5.1 Director's Report and Finance Report

The Director's Report and Finance report was taken as read.



