

Minutes  
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission  
52<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Plenary Meeting  
19 October 2021

**Present:**

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

**Apologies:**

- Dr Frank Conaty
- Prof Caroline Fennell

**In attendance:**

- Laurence Bond, Director
- Michael O' Neill, Head of Legal – Item 4.1
- Dr Iris Elliott, Head of Policy and Research – Item 8.1
- Maria Mullan, Senior Policy and Research Officer – Item 8.1
- Muireann Ní Thuairisg, Minute Taker

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Plenary Meeting of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission took place between 9:30am-3:15pm on 19 October 2021 by video conference.

### 1.1 Apologies, Quorum and Declaration of Interest

Apologies were noted from CF and FC. There were no declarations of interest and the meeting was quorate.

## 1.2 Closed session for Members

[REDACTED]

## 1.3 Draft Minutes

The draft minutes of the ordinary Commission meeting of 7 September were approved, proposed by SM and seconded by AH.

The draft minutes of the extraordinary Commission meeting of 10 September were approved, proposed by KL and RM.

The draft minutes of the extraordinary Commission meeting of 17 September were approved, proposed by KL and COD.

The draft minutes of the extraordinary Commission meeting of 6 October were approved, proposed by RMcD and COD.

## 1.4 Matters arising, not otherwise dealt with on the Agenda

It was agreed to postpone discussion on Item 3.1 on the meeting with HIQA until the November meeting. [REDACTED]

## 1.5 Director's Report | Staffing Expenditure Update | Finance Report

SG noted that, following feedback from Commission members, the Director's Report would henceforth be tabled earlier in the agenda to ensure sufficient time for discussion. In addition, Finance Reports will now be brought to the Commission each quarter. The Director's Report, Finance Report and Staffing Expenditure Update were taken as read.

LB noted that IHREC has received a budget increase of €600,000 for 2022, an increase of 8.65% over 2021. Members welcomed this positive development and emphasised the importance of seeking ongoing budget and organisational growth over a number of years to ensure that IHREC can fully deliver on its statutory mandate.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Noting the completion of the IHREC-ESRI research programme, members requested that the Policy and Research Committee consider future research strategy and programmes.

Members noted the recent and forthcoming research on housing issues, and following discussion SG agreed to consider holding a more general discussion on housing at a future meeting. SG also agreed to examine the possibility of meeting with the Dublin Homelessness Network. It was noted that the Policy and Research Committee is to progress discussion of the draft policy paper on social rights in the Constitution.

Members requested discussion on Public Sector Duty compliance survey at a future meeting and emphasised the importance of identifying effective ways of enforcing the duty. Noting the recent press release on human trafficking, members requested an update on the issue of exploitation in the fishing industry.

## 1.6 Chief Commissioner Update

The Chief Commissioners report was taken as read.

SG briefed members on her recent meetings on the Equality Reviews on Traveller Accommodation with Minister of State for Local Government and Planning Peter Burke T.D., and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O' Gorman T.D. A meeting is scheduled with Minister for Housing Darragh O' Brien T.D.

SG will advance strategy-planning discussions by email in advance of the third and final strategy session on 18 November.

SG has accepted an invitation from Hilka Becker, Chairperson of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal to visit the Tribunal offices to see how they operate. Members were requested to get in touch with SG if they are interested in joining her on the visit.

Members asked to be updated on the correspondence from End Deportations Belfast on the practice of cross-border transport checks by An Garda Síochána. SG will revert to KL on the background to correspondence from SIPTU on ITF's cessation of the Inland Fisheries Education & Outreach Program.

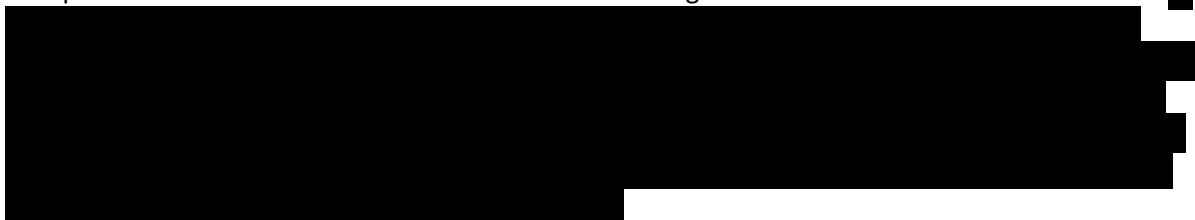
## 2.1 Committee Updates

### (a) Casework Committee

An update note on the Casework Committee meetings of 9 September, 17 September and 11 October was taken as read.

### (b) Audit & Risk Committee

An update note on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 12 October was taken as read.



### (c) Disability Advisory Committee

An update note on the Disability Advisory Committee meeting held on 15 September was taken as read. RMcD noted that DAC had discussed the implementation of CRPD Article 4.3 and had asked for further work to be done on CRPD compliant models of representation and participation.

**(d) Worker Employer Advisory Committee**

An update note on the Worker Employer Advisory Committee meeting held on 9 September was taken as read. KL clarified that the WEAC had discussed the importance of wider representation in the Committee. It was agreed that the WEAC Terms of Reference including membership, would be discussed at a future meeting



**4.1 Section 35 Working Group**

SG presented the work of the Section 35 Working Group to date as set out in the memo, end to end process map and other procedural documents circulated.

Members strongly commended the work that had been completed and agreed to adopt the procedure proposed, with the proviso that further consideration be given to the text of the template letters and how they would be used.

SG proposed to discuss potential inquiry topics at the Commission meeting in November.

**5.1 Equality Legislation Review**

LB briefly introduced the update note on engagement with the review of the Equality Acts and on the ad hoc sub group meeting that had taken place on 1 October.

He noted that work on a Commission submission was underway and it was agreed that this would be discussed at the next Policy and Research Committee. The roundtable was scheduled on the morning of 8 November, and a joint project with FLAC to provide information and support engagement on the review was about to commence.

SG indicated that the key decision required from the Commission concerned the proposal to set up an Advisory Committee in this area. Members strongly endorsed this approach and it was agreed that a paper on the Advisory Committee terms of reference and membership would be brought to the Commission for decision as soon as possible. SG requested members to send her any thoughts or comments on the terms of reference.

**6.1 Disability Advisory Committee Terms of Reference**

Following discussion, the revised terms of reference were approved, subject to a small number of amendments.

Members welcomed the proposal on providing a stipend but noted that the appropriate approach needed further consideration.

## 7.1 ENNHRI Committee Roles

SG noted that ENNHRI have opened nominations for candidates to seek election to a number of Board and Finance Committee posts and to a number of Ganhri working groups, as detailed in documentation circulated to members. SG will follow up with CF regarding her interest and availability to go forward again as the IHREC nominee to Chair ENNHRI and will update members by email.

SG invited members to contact her if they were interested in going forward for election to any of the Ganhri Working Groups. RMCD indicated her interest in the CRPD WG. SG noted that as the nomination deadline was 30 November, these matters might need to be dealt with in advance of the November meeting.

## 8.1 Housing, Planning and Development Bill - draft observations

Members discussed draft observations on the Housing, Planning and Development Bill. It was agreed that the paper would be finalised and submitted, taking account of the feedback received.

## 9.1 Accreditation

SG outlined IHRECs engagement with the re accreditation process. Following discussion members noted the SCA recommendations and agreed to take account of them where appropriate and relevant.

## 10.1 Meeting Dates for 2022

Possible dates for Commission meetings in 2022 were discussed. It was agreed that a specific day, probably Tuesday or Thursday, be agreed on which all ordinary Commission meetings would take place.

It was proposed to again hold 8 ordinary meetings in 2022 and it was agreed in principle to hold each second meeting in person and to avoid blended meetings if at all possible. It was agreed in principle to hold all subcommittee meetings online. Members requested having shorter Commission meetings and asked that subcommittee dates for 2022 also be scheduled.



Signed:

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Sinéad Gibney  
Chief Commissioner

Date: 30 November 2021