

Commission Meeting Minutes

13 April 2026

10:00 - 16:00

Bridgeside House, Edinburgh

Present

- Angela O'Hagan (Chair) AOH
- Aaliya Seyal (Member) AS
- Claire Methven O'Brien (Member) CMO
- Rosemary Agnew (Member) RA
- Shelley Gray (Member) SG

In attendance

- Jan Savage (Executive Director) JS
- David Lees (Head of Secretariat and Business Support) DL
- Jennifer Cannon (Head of Legal and Policy) JC
- Tiia Kontro (Minute Secretary) TK

Apologies

- Rosie McIntosh (Head of Communications and Engagement) RM

List of acronyms

- ARC: Audit and Risk Committee
- ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights

- EHRC: Equality and Human Rights Commission
- NHRI: National Human Rights Institution
- OLR: Order of Lifelong Restriction
- SCA: GANHRI Sub Committee on Accreditation
- SLT: Senior Leadership Team
- SPS: Scottish Prison Service

1. Welcomes

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all Members and attendees.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 No declarations of interests were registered in relation to any of the agenda items.

2.2 AOH noted, for transparency purposes, academic publications that were instigated before AOH taking up post as Chair of the Commission, but that are going to be published in due course.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2026 were approved with minor revisions.

4. Matters arising

4.1 The Action Log was reviewed and update shared on key points.

4.2 Risk Workshop suggested by ARC Chair will be rescheduled due to existing commitments of the Commission and associated diary pressures.

5. Chair Report

5.1 The Chair provided an update and summary of relevant meetings and engagements since the previous Commission meeting in February, which was noted.

5.2 The following additional points were discussed.

- A letter has been issued to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Michael O'Flaherty, to invite him to visit Scotland.
- Training for the Members and Chair. It was agreed that all Members will attend On Board training.

Action 1: Information regarding On Board training will be circulated and all Members will be signed up to complete the training course at their earliest convenience.

Action 2: Share agreed 'trust' behaviours of members, SLT and team with all.

6. Member Report

6.1 The Members provided an update and summary of relevant meetings and engagements since the previous Commission meeting in February, which was noted.

7. Executive Director Report

7.1 The Executive Director report was tabled on matters relating to operational performance, corporate governance, and risk. The following additional points were discussed.

7.2 It was agreed that Operational Plan 2026-27 will be circulated via correspondence to allow SLT some more time to determine timelines associated with the plan.

7.3 Following a discussion, the Commission agreed to designate a small sub-group of Members to convene and oversee the SHRC response to an emerging issue with significant impacts on the risk profile of the SHRC.

7.4 The Commission discussed the SHRC commitment to take on further litigation work and agreed that the SHRC risk register should be updated to reflect this accordingly.

7.5 The Commission noted the commitment and resource dedicated to the People and Culture project, from both external consultant as well as staff and Members. It was agreed that, following minor changes to the wording, commitment to embedding the agreed trust behaviours into SHRC work is unchanged. It was agreed that the results of the Commission sessions would be shared with wider staff team via correspondence, with a session for all staff and members to be scheduled.

Action 3 - Commission Single Issue Committee to be established with ToR.

Action 4 - SHRC Strategic Risk Register to be updated to expand profile of Legal Risk beyond implementation of UNCRC powers.

8. ARC report

8.1 A verbal update from March 2026 ARC meeting was shared and noted.

8.2 Minutes from December 2025 ARC meeting were tabled for information and noted.

CMO joined the meeting.

9. Matters arising (continued)

9.1 The Chair briefed CMO on the matters discussed previously at the meeting and noted that CMO had previously requested to further discuss the SHRC involvement in the joint statement from the UK NHRIs on the ECHR. It was agreed that further discussions would be scheduled for Members to develop a more focused view following any additional conversations taking place at the 4 NHRI meeting scheduled for May 2026.

Action 5: Member discussion on ECHR to be scheduled.

10. Comms and Engagement

10.1. Comms and Engagement Update

10.1.1 In absence of RM due to annual leave, JS shared a brief update on recent communications activities. Members noted the updates. The following additional points were discussed.

10.1.2 The Commission requested an update on all comms outputs ahead of publishing. The Commission discussed the potential use of a calendar with planned outputs visible.

Action 6: Publications Calendar for Year ahead to be produced for Members on all planned matters requiring Commission sign off.

10.2. Options Appraisal on continued use of X

10.2.1 An optional appraisal paper on the continued use of X was tabled and noted by the Commission.

10.2.2 The Commission agreed with the proposal to stop posting regularly on X, but to retain the account for monitoring purposes and sharing major publications.

Action 7 - Retain SHRC X account.

10.3. Comms and Engagement plan

10.3.1 JS presented the Comms and Engagement plan to the Commission. It was noted that the plans in this meeting were drafted following strategic planning sessions with Members and reflect prior agreements.

10.3.2 Following a discussion the Commission approved the plan pending minor changes and additions.

Action 8 - Implement comms and engagement plan across the SHRC.

11. Legal and Policy

11.1. Policy Update

11.1.1 JC joined the meeting to present the legal and policy update. A Policy Update paper was presented for assurance. Members noted the updates and the following points were discussed.

11.1.2 It was noted that Members will receive separate guidance on how to engage with new parliamentarians in the post-election period.

11.2. Grooming Gangs

11.2.1 JC presented a short paper on the public inquiry into grooming gangs, announced by the Scottish Government in February 2026. The members noted the paper, and the following points were discussed.

11.2.2 The Commission decided that a watching brief is not sufficient action. Members agreed that further engagement by SHRC will be required. In the first instance, Members decided to write to the Chair of the Inquiry and requested that the staff team bring updates on progress of the Inquiry to the Commission. The Commission will return to this item once the meeting with the Chair has progressed.

Action 9 - Write to the Chair of the Inquiry

11.3. Monitoring and Research Update

11.3.1 An update of the status of current Monitoring and Research work was tabled for assurance. Members noted the paper.

11.4. Monitoring Plan

11.4.1 JC tabled the new Monitoring Plan 2026 - 28. Following a discussion the Commission approved the plan pending minor changes and additions.

Action 10 - SHRC staff to implement the Monitoring Plan 2026-28

Action 11 - Develop an internal database of NHRI recommendations.

11.5. Legal Update

11.5.1 An update on the status of current legal work was tabled for assurance and decision. Members noted the paper. The following points were discussed.

11.5.2 The Commission discussed the potential for intervention on a case. The members agreed that more information is required before a decision can be reached.

11.5.3 Members noted that a request to cist the case from the party raising proceedings was live, and if this were granted, there would be more time to consider the merits of the intervention.

11.5.4 In the meantime, Members agreed that SHRC could advise the Courts of its potential interest in the case, but not to confirm that it is intervening.

Action 12: Further information will be shared with the members via correspondence to allow further discussion and decision on the potential intervention.

11.6. Section 14 Intervention Next Steps

11.6.1 Members considered a paper on the SHRC's use of its section 14 intervention powers, and options for potential further work on the policy, which is subject to judicial review, regardless of the outcome.

11.6.2 The Commission agreed to a phased approach with first steps involving discussions with SPS at the upcoming biannual meeting and writing to the SPS to request further information on the prison population impacted by the policy.

Action 13: Letter to be issued from SHRC to SPS to request data on the sex and gender of the Scottish Prison Population, and current accommodation status.

Action 14: This letter to be approved by all Members of the Commission ahead of issue.

11.7. Legal Plan 2026 - 28

11.7.1 JC tabled the new Legal Plan 2026 - 28. Following a discussion the Commission approved the plan pending minor changes and additions.

Action 15 - Legal Plan to be implemented across the SHRC.

12. Strategy and Governance

12.1. EHRC Strategic Framework Agreement Progress

12.1.1 JS shared the most up to date version of the Strategic Framework Agreement with EHRC which has been drafted collaboratively between SHRC and EHRC.

The Commission approved the current version without change on the content.

Action 16 - JS to communicate the final SHRC position with EHRC and confirm final version through Chair for approval.

12.2. SCA Re-accreditation

12.2.1 JS tabled a paper on SCA Re-accreditation to brief members on the next steps in the final stages of the process, and to get a steer on SHRC strategic approach to recommendations going into the Hearing.

12.2.2 AOH shared a brief update on the SCA re-accreditation process and any subsequent developments since the last Commission Meeting in February.

12.2.3 Members noted the update, and the proposed approach.

12.3. Operational Plan closeout

12.3.1 Operational Plan closeout report was shared with Members with a status update on performance against the SHRC work programmes against the Strategic Plan 2024-28 via the Operational Plan 2025-26. It was noted that learnings from the process have informed the development of the 2026-27 Operational Plan.

12.3.2 Members noted the report and acknowledged the significant amount of work on people and culture project amongst other activities. It was noted that the Commission wishes to demonstrate success and impact of the work via varied metrics.

13. People and Culture Update

13.1 DL tabled a paper on updates regarding People and Culture project for assurance. Members noted and endorsed the updates and proposed plans to progress with the next steps of the process.

Action 17 - Progress with the Interim Resourcing Plan

14. AOB

Next meeting will take place on 1 June 2026.

ENDS.