

Heidi Allen MP
House of Commons
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Dear Ms Allen

Parliamentary Questions – EHRC Disability Commissioner

I write in response to the Parliamentary Questions that you submitted concerning the role of disability commissioner at the Equality and Human Rights Commission. My responses to those questions are set out below.

\$13072017|1|N|18072017|Heidi Allen|South Cambridgeshire|To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the decision to abolish the role of disability commissioner was taken outside of a Equality and Human Rights Commission Board meeting; and when that decision was made. 4776

Decisions on the roles undertaken by Commissioners are a matter for the Chair of the Commission. The Chair discussed the disability commissioner role with other Commissioners in between the formal Board meetings that took place in March and May 2017, and took the view that the role should be discontinued. The Board formally agreed on 11 May that the role of disability commissioner should cease. The minutes of that meeting can be found at the following link, and I have summarised the relevant section for your convenience.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/corporate-reporting/board-meetings>

Summary of minutes:

“9. Disability Committee Transition Arrangements

9.1 David Isaac introduced this item and reflected on the uncertainty surrounding the purpose of the appointment of a Disability Commissioner given the dissolution of the statutory Disability Committee and the currently transitional arrangements in place in relation to the Disability Advisory Committee. The Board acknowledged this.

.....

9.4 David Isaac reflected on the universal and domain-based approach of the Commission, which involved all Commissioners being responsible for considering all protected characteristics, with a policy lead for each protected characteristic at officer level. Because of this and the dissolution of the statutory Disability Committee, the need for a Disability Commissioner had fallen away and would not be in line with the general approach. He asked the Board for their comments. The Board agreed that, on this basis, the appointment of a Commissioner who was particularly identified as leading for the Commission on one particular protected characteristic would be unhelpful and confusing and therefore the role of Disability Commissioner should cease.....”

\$13072017|2|N|18072017|Heidi Allen|South Cambridgeshire|To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, (a) how and (b) when the decision to abolish the role of disability commissioner was communicated to the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Disability Advisory Committee. 4777

The Board’s decision to discontinue the role of Disability Commissioner was communicated to the interim Disability Advisory Committee by email on 26 May 2017.

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\$13072017|3|N|18072017|Heidi Allen|South Cambridgeshire|To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Disability Advisory Committee was (a) consulted and (b) informed in advance of the abolition of the role of disability commissioner in June 2017. 4778

The interim Disability Advisory Committee was not constituted at the time the Chair and Commissioners were considering this issue, and so was not consulted in advance, although the role of disability commissioner was discussed at length at the Committee's first meeting.

The interim Disability Advisory Committee was informed on 26 May 2017 that the role of Disability Commissioner was being discontinued.

I trust you find this information helpful. I am sending a copy of this letter to the Minister of State at the Department for Education so that a copy can be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours sincerely



Rebecca Hilsenrath

Chief Executive

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