



Strategic Direction and Business Plan

Independent Reporting Commission

Strategic Direction

Background

The IRC was established by an international Treaty (“the Treaty”) between the UK Government and the Irish Government on 13 September 2016.¹

The IRC’s functions as described in paragraph 5.1 of Section A of the [Fresh Start Agreement](#) and Articles 4 and 5 of the Treaty (with particular reference to paramilitary groups declared to be on ceasefire) are to:

- **Report** annually, or on such further occasions as jointly requested by the UK Government and Irish Government, on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland; to report on the progress of implementation of the relevant measures of the three administrations i.e. the UK Government, the Irish Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive; and inform the implementation of the Executive’s strategy;
- The IRC, in its reports, may **make recommendations** to the Northern Ireland Executive in order to inform future Programme for Government priorities and commitments through to 2021²; and
- **Consult** with a wide range of stakeholders in carrying out its functions, including: the UK Government and relevant law enforcement agencies; the Irish Government and relevant law enforcement agencies; and in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, statutory agencies, local councils, communities and civic society organisations.

The Commission’s role can be summarised as follows:

¹ Sections 1 to 5 of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016, Regulations 2 and 3 of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016 (IRC) Regulations 2016 and the Independent Reporting Commission Act 2017 give full effect to the Treaty.

² The current Commissioners have been reappointed to their roles from 1 April 2022 for a further three year term.



The objective of the Commission, set out in Article 3 of the Treaty, is to carry out its functions with a view to promoting progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland, and supporting long term peace and stability in society and stable and inclusive devolved Government in Northern Ireland.

Business Planning

This Strategic and Business Plan underpins the core work undertaken by the Commission and its staff to discharge these functions, and those common to all public sector organisations relating to good governance and effective use of resources.

The Plan sets out the objectives in relation to each of the IRC's functions and, where practicable, the date by which they are to be achieved, the stages or milestones along the way, the indicators by which performance will be assessed and the identity of the individual with lead responsibility for achieving the objective.

The Commission and its Accounting Officer monitor performance against the Plan on a regular basis and, where appropriate, adjust it or re-allocate resources to take account of changes in the surrounding environment. Progress is reported in the IRC's Annual Report and Accounts and the Plan is reviewed annually.

Annual objectives

Objective 1:

To report annually (or more frequently if jointly requested by UK and Irish Governments) on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity, in particular from those paramilitary groups declared to be on ceasefire:

Target	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
<p>To provide a considered analysis of progress towards ending paramilitary activity, analysing progress on two tracks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• policing and criminal justice interventions, and• measures addressing socio-economic issues affecting those communities where the paramilitaries primarily operate.	<p>Commissioners and Secretariat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In consultation with key stakeholders, understanding the impact of paramilitary activity on communities.• In consultation with law enforcement, and other relevant statutory bodies, understanding paramilitary activity and its links to criminality and organised crime in NI.• Development of an agreed programme of work with key milestones, including an agreed stakeholder engagement plan.• Mapping progress against baselines and measures to inform the Commission's reports on progress towards ending paramilitary activity.• Timely production of a comprehensive annual report.• If requested by the UK and Irish Governments: timely production of comprehensive ad hoc reports. <p><i>Further detail about stakeholder engagement is set out under Objective 3.</i></p>

Objective 2:

To report on the implementation of the relevant measures of the Irish Government, the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the Executive's Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Action Plan and Phase Two of the Tackling Paramilitary, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme:

Target	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
To provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● visibility on progress,● ongoing impetus to implementation of the Executive's Action Plan and Phase Two of the Tackling Paramilitary, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, and● visibility on the relevant measures of the Irish Government and the UK Government.	Commissioners and Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Analysis of the implementation of measures is reported.● Through the stakeholder engagement plan also references in relation to objectives 3, 4 and 5 below, conduct focused and constructive engagement with:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ NI Executive,○ Those bodies leading on actions set out in the Executive's Action Plan,○ Targeted recipients of Executive's Action Plan initiatives,○ The Irish Government,○ The UK Government,○ Other stakeholders as set out in Article 5 of the International Treaty.

Ongoing Objectives

Objective 3:

In carrying out its functions, consult:

- the Northern Ireland Executive, the PSNI, relevant statutory agencies, local Councils, communities and civic society
- the UK Government and relevant law enforcement agencies,
- the Irish Government and relevant law enforcement agencies:

Target	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
To engage to inform the work of the Commission and understand the issues linked to its mandate.	Commissioners and Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused and constructive engagement. • An agreed stakeholder engagement plan to facilitate consultation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The NI Executive, ○ Relevant NI government departments, including the Programme Team ○ Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), ○ Statutory agencies, ○ NI local Councils, ○ Communities, ○ Civic society organisations. ○ His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, ○ National Crime Agency, ○ Other relevant law enforcement agencies, ○ The Northern Ireland Office (NIO), ○ Other relevant Whitehall departments. ○ An Garda Síochána (AGS), ○ Cross Border Joint Agency Task Force, ○ The Department of Justice (DOJ) Ireland ○ The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), ○ Other relevant Irish Government departments.

Objective 4:**Make recommendations to the Northern Ireland Executive in order to inform future Programme for Government priorities and commitments, and to inform the implementation of the Executive's Programme**

Target	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
To make recommendations where appropriate that influence the Programme for Government and to inform the implementation of the Executive's Programme.	Commissioners and Joint Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying, including from consultation and research, areas which the Executive may wish to consider for inclusion in the Programme for Government and/or future work in this area.• Government decision making reflecting recommendations in the Commission's reports.• Reviewing progress made following recommendations.

Objective 5:**Carry out functions with a view to supporting long term peace and stability in society and stable and inclusive devolved Government in Northern Ireland**

Target	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
To report on practical, comprehensive and effective measures which contribute to ending paramilitarism and to highlight areas of good practice in this regard.	Commissioners and Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlight practical and effective measures.• Highlight areas of good practice.

Objective 6:**To maintain high standards of corporate governance and ensure value for money is achieved**

Targets	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
To achieve high standards of corporate governance. To ensure value for money.	UK Joint Secretary Support: Secretariat Staff Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key relationships amongst the accounting officer, the Internal Audit team, the Commission and the sponsoring department are defined and facilitated.• Monthly financial and regular governance meetings are held with Sponsor Body.• Annual Report and Accounts are completed on time and to the required standards.• Production of unqualified accounts.• Corporate governance matters are included in agendas for monthly Commission meetings.• Effective, efficient and accurate processes of budgetary and financial management.• Spend within budget and in accordance with public expenditure requirements.• In-year efficiencies identified.• Payments processed in a timely manner, and relevant finance processes adhered to.• Ensure that all procurement is compliant with the regulations stipulated by sponsor department.• Ensure compliance with gifts/hospitality policies and registration and managing of interests.• Risks identified, assessed and managed on an on-going basis by use of risk register.
Website established in line with Commission requirements.	Joint Secretaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• User friendly website in place with relevant publications on line.
To ensure all information and information assets are managed and stored by the Commission in line with relevant policy.	Joint Secretaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage information in accordance with all relevant legislative requirements and policies.• Monitor information assurance procedures.

Objective 7:**Maintain an effective secretariat to enable the Commission to deliver on its statutory duties and objectives**

Target	Lead Responsibility	Performance Indicators
Ensure that the necessary staff and resources are secured to meet the full requirements of the Commission within budget allocation.	Joint Secretaries Support: Secretariat staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate numbers and grades of secretariat staff recruited in line with civil service recruitment principles.
The provision of an efficient and effective service to the Commission.	Joint Secretaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objectives set for secretariat staff.• Staff meeting performance and developmental objectives.• Ensure that all staff are provided with appropriate training opportunities to help them fulfil their respective roles and meet their objectives.• Address any absence of administrative support staff and resultant work pressures.
Seek to uphold the good reputation of the IRC.	Commissioners and Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through engagement and the profile of the Commission, seek to uphold its reputation.• Procure the services of a media adviser to provide public relations advice to help manage the Commissions' reputation, and to manage all media relations work, including press releases, enquiries, and briefings in relation to report launches.