



NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

**MEETING 26th April 2023, NIPSO, ASM, Glendinning House,
76 Murray Street, Belfast**

Members Present:

Dónall Curtin – Chair; (DC)
Terry McGonigal – Independent Member; (TM)
Patricia Snell – Independent Member (PS)

In Attendance:

Margaret Kelly – Accounting Officer/Ombudsman; (MK)
Sean Martin –Deputy Ombudsman; (SM)
Gary Currie – NIAO; (GC)
Philip Whitehead – ASM (PW)
Sarah Sherry – NIPSO; Secretariat (SS)
Corinne Nelson – Director of Investigations, NIPSO (CN)

Item	Minute	Action
1.	Apologies No Apologies	
2.	Conflicts of Interest DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.	
3.	Minutes Minutes from 26 th January 2023 were agreed upon.	
4	Update on Action Points <i>Information Security Policy</i> – a new update of June 23 <i>Finance Manual</i> – SM to meet with TMcG <i>Advisory Committee/Effectiveness Review (ARC)</i> – HeadsTogether, who have governance expertise have been appointed and work is underway. Terms of reference have been provided to the Consultants.	SM/TMcG to meet

	<p><i>HR Support Tender</i> – final version to be reviewed by SM</p> <p><i>CARE Review</i> – 2nd round of quarterly meetings – all going well. Agreement was made that the CARE overview be added to every April ARC meeting, going forward.</p> <p><i>Phishing Testing</i> –With IT Assist – currently on a waiting list</p> <p>DC offered his congratulations to SS and HR department for the excellent comments from staff regarding induction.</p>	
5	<p>Ombudsman Update (verbal)</p> <p>The Ombudsman offered her congratulations to CN on her post as Director of Investigations, who was invited to attend this meeting. Going forward she would like SMT members on a rotational basis to attend the meetings, this was agreed upon.</p> <p><i>Budget</i> – MK expressed her concerns regarding the decision made by the Dept of Finance and possible budget cuts. DC suggested a letter to be sent from the ARC Chairman requesting a meeting.</p> <p><i>LGES</i> – A recent Judicial Review was lodged by a Councillor in-relation to a Commissioner adjudication decision. The Commissioner decision was upheld.</p> <p><i>Work with Asylum Seekers</i> – Rob Behrens (PHSO) had a successful trip to Belfast as he met NIPSO staff and informed them of his work and then met with several Asylum Seekers, who spoke to him regarding their difficulty of complaining on accommodation and getting access to health. Stephen Farry MP (Alliance Party) indicated his support also.</p>	
6	<p>Financial Management</p> <p>Report was taken as read.</p> <p>DC requested improving accuracy in coding on SAGE</p>	<p>SM – to advise CS regarding the accuracy on SAGE</p>
7	<p>Case Performance Management</p> <p>SM reported that there had been some staff changes in the LGES team, despite this there had been a considerable improvement in performance with both KPI's being met. SM highlighted that there is also a legacy of older cases, but he hoped that by the end of the calendar year these cases will be closed.</p> <p>In relation to maladministration performance CN advised that there were delays in some cases due to some public bodies taking a considerable time to respond to NIPSO, but all 3 KPIs have been met.</p> <p>KPI8 target was not met, with changing staff at the start of the financial year, but this information is now reported to SMT monthly. TM commented that most statutory bodies pay 95% within 30 days, not 10 days</p>	<p>CN – update the format of the report</p>

<p>8</p>	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>PW reported that ASM has undertaken the <u>Review of Systems for Risk Management</u> in accordance with NIPSO 22-23 internal audit plan. The fieldwork focused on assessing the following control objectives in respect of NIPSO’s systems for Risk Management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To consider the adequacy and effectiveness of NIPSO’s risk management structures including specifically, the Governance Manual and Risk Appetite Statement (b) To assess the adequacy and effectiveness of NIPSO’s approach to risk management, including the identification, articulation, scoring, and management of risks (c) To consider the training and awareness levels of senior management regarding risk management (d) To determine whether reporting on risk management is provided to the Audit and Risk Committee, on a regular basis and whether the reporting is timely, accurate and at an appropriate level of detail. <p>It was identified that a regular review of the risk register is conducted at quarterly SMT and ARC meetings. Members of the SMT have been assigned as risk owners for any risks which may arise under each strategic area. SM is responsible for maintaining and updating the Corporate Risk Register in line with discussions held at SMT and ARC meetings.</p> <p>Training was delivered in October 2021 to SMT, ARC members, and middle management and the training is recorded and offered to the new SMT members. It had been recommended to incorporate a new Risk Management e-learning module in the training development plan.</p> <p>Risk Reporting – no issues and reporting is accurate.</p> <p>The existing risk management, control and governance systems in place for risk management provide a satisfactory assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of NIPSO’s objectives in relation to risk management.</p> <p>DC commented that it was it good to see that the recommendations made were all priority 3.</p> <p>PS remarked it is a good reflection of the hard work being done at a corporate level.</p> <p>SM reviewed that the training and the refresher training on risk management are helpful, and the feedback from SMT each quarter is beneficial, and that discussions on risk also occur as part of team meetings to enable Directors to provide feedback.</p> <p>PW advised that of the three reports undertaken in 22/23 all received an assurance rating of satisfactory, with a total of 14 new recommendations. This is a positive reflection on the organisation.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update</p> <p>The Recommendations Database document was taken as read.</p>	

	SM reported that quite a few of the recommendations are near completion and it is hoped they will be closed by the next ARC meeting in July.	
10	<p>External Audit – NIAO Update</p> <p>GC advised that he is responsible for the overall audit, with fieldwork conducted by a member of the audit team.</p> <p>The 22-23 timetable has been brought back into line after the significant changes to the finance team which resulted in delays to the production of the annual report and accounts for 21-22. It is anticipated that report to those charged with Governance issued for the 22-23 accounts would be issued by 11th August 23.</p> <p>DC went through the actions for the Audit and Risk Committee, with members replying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether our assessment of the risks of material misstatements to the financial statements is complete – this was agreed upon. • Whether management has plans in place to address the risk identified by NIAO and whether these plans are adequate – this was agreed upon. • Proposed audit response to address this risk – this was agreed upon. • Whether members have knowledge of any: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting NIPSO – NONE - Instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that could be expected to have a fundamental effect on the operations of NIPSO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NONE - Actual, suspected or alleged irregularity affecting NIPSO – NONE 	
11	<p>Business Plan – Q4</p> <p>SM advised that some of the objectives not achieved have been moved to the new business plan. DC would like ownership information to be provided on each of the strategic objectives.</p>	SS/SM – allocated staff to objectives
12	<p>Risk Register – Q4</p> <p>DC asked for this document to be taken as read.</p> <p>PS advised that Point 2 to be changed from red to amber and 5 should be red. SS to make the necessary changes.</p>	SS – make necessary changes
14	<p>Comment on Information Items</p> <p>No Comments</p>	
15	<p>AOB</p> <p>Training for Committee Members – annual basis – look at discussion of what is available and have a morning session.</p> <p>Skills and Analysis course may be an option.</p>	SM – Training for committee members
16	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 30th August 2023 – Progressive House, 9.30 am</p>	