





## NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

## MEETING 27th October 2022, NI Audit Office

## **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 – Acting Deputy Ombudsman; (SM) Gary Currie – NIAO; (GC) Emma Taggart – NIAO (ET) Brian Clerkin – ASM; Internal Audit (BC) Philip Whitehead - ASM Sarah Sherry – NIPSO; Secretariat (SS)

Item	Minute	Action
1.	Apologies	
	No apologies received	
2.	Conflicts of Interest	
	DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda.	
3.	Minutes	
	TM noted that 1.8 – Pensions was not put on the Action Tracker, SS to make necessary amendments.	SS – update tracker
	Minutes from 24 <sup>th</sup> June 22 were agreed upon.	
4	Update on Action Points	
	Updated Finance Manual – Ongoing until a new Director of Corporate Services is appointed	

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	HR Support Tender Process – SM advised that the document is now with the legal department.	SS – update tracker
	Training – GC provided a short presentation, along with handouts to the committee regarding the role of ARC members. He highlighted the key principles of challenges, financial reporting, risk management, counter fraud, whistle blowing and risks relating to the role.	
	DC asked SS to include on the Action Tracker, against himself - Self Assessment Checklist	
	GC confirmed that an External Review should be done 3 to 5 years, as a good practice. MK advised that once the HR tender has been agreed this is something she will action.	MK – External
	DC thanked GC for the informative presentation	Review of ARC
	Continuity Plan - SM advised that due to the car park/structural issues, the Continuity Plan became an active/working document. Currently seeking feedback from staff.	
	TM queried if access to the server went down would there be access to the contacts. SM confirmed that hard copies are kept by the Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman and all SMT members have their team's contact numbers.	
	DC said that cyber is a major risk factor and suggested external advice for solutions.	SM – Continuity Plan Scenarios
5	Ombudsman Update (verbal)	
	MK gave a verbal update on the Office's budgetary position and the potential risks to the Office because of the current political instability.	
	Complaint Standards – progressing well – meetings have taken place with Strategic Network and Operational Network for Local Government. Scoping exercises have been undertaken and engagement meetings have taken place in the health and social care sector.	
	LGES Function – A survey has been sent to all local councillors, asking them for their understanding of the code, training and experience with complaints. 89 responses to date and then a further survey will be sent out to CEOs and Senior Staff of Councils and all complaints from 2017.	
	A meeting took place with GMC and individual regulators and some joint proposals are being taken forward regarding enabling regulators and the importance of engagement and education before enforcement.	

6	Financial Management	
	SM advised that the figures presented are presented in the absence of an approved NI budget for 2022/23.	
	Work is ongoing looking at a full year projection.	
	DC highlighted the urgency in progressing the appointment of a Head of Finance. TM commented on the format of presentation of the reports. DC agreed.	SM update report template
7	Case Performance Management	
	SM reported that all targets are being met in MAL and LGES and there are good processes in place for tracking and monitoring.	
	DC commented that this has been a good opportunity to look at the overview of how caseloads have been managed and define the consistency	
8	Internal Audit	
	HR Management Report – to be taken as read	
	BC provided some highlights from the report	
	The report received a satisfactory rating	
	Compliance with General Data Protection Regulation Report – to be taken as read.	SM – Share 3 year plan with ARC
	BC advised that an agreement has been made with management to review the following in 2022/23:	
	Communications and Stakeholder Engagement	
	Risk Management Review of Strategic Planning and KPIs And also a follow up review	
	Workplans over a 6 day period and term of reference have been agreed upon.	
	SM to reshare the 3 year plan to ARC committee.	
9	Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update	
	SM reported there were still some recommendations on the finance side still to be completed which will need to wait until a Finance Director is in post.	
	However good progress has been made on other audit recommendations including the new audit recommendations from this year. SM highlighted some of the recommendations.	

10	External Audit – NIAO Update	
	GC reported that the audit of the annual report and accounts was very nearly complete. Signed accounts from MK have been received.	
	ET provided an overview of the NIAO Report to those Charged with Governance.	
11	Business Plan – Q2	
	The Business Plan was taken as read.	
12	Risk Register Q2	
	SM explained the risks that had been originally identified are still the main risks to the organisation.	
	MK tabled the draft Risk Appetite Statement and welcomed any comments.	
13	DAC IPA	
	MK tabled a document regarding her rationale for agreement of a Direct Award Contract.	
14	Comment on Information Items	
	DC found the DAO and FD Letter database useful	
15	AOB	
	MK reported on a staff away day which focused on the Coaching and Mentoring Framework and the Strategic Plan. Positive feedback has been received from all staff. DC asked for an overview to be completed on how the CARE package is working in mid 2023.	SM – CARE update for June agenda
16	Date of next meeting	
	26 <sup>th</sup> January 2023 – Progressive House, 10 am	