

COMMISSIONER FOR OLDER PEOPLE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (COPNI)

AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2019 AT 1.30PM  
IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

**MEMBERS** Gerard Campbell (Chair)  
Joseph Campbell  
Professor Dolores O'Reilly

**IN ATTENDANCE** Eddie Lynch (Commissioner, COPNI)  
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)  
Barry Holliday (Department for Communities)  
Claire Lowe (Northern Ireland Audit Office)  
Catriona McHugh (Moore (N.I.) LLP – Internal Audit)  
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)  
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI)

<b>Agenda Item 1: Apologies</b>  There were no apologies. The Chair welcomed B Holliday to his first meeting of the Committee, and all present introduced themselves.	<b>NOTED</b>
<b>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</b> <b>a) <u>Conflicts of Interest</u></b>  No conflicts of interest were declared.	<b>NOTED</b>
<b>b) <u>Fraud</u></b>  No incidents were reported in this period.	<b>NOTED</b>
<b>c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u></b>  The four items were noted and it was signed by the Chair.	<b>ARAC 12/19/2c APPROVED</b>
<b>d) <u>Register of International Conferences &amp; Events</u></b>  There were no items for this period.	<b>NOTED</b>
<b>e) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u></b>  The single item was noted.	<b>ARAC 12/19/2e NOTED</b>

<p><b>f) <u>Whistleblowing</u></b></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of Meetings &amp; Action Tracker</b></p>	
<p><b>a) <u>Draft Minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019</u></b></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and they were signed by D O'Reilly who had chaired that meeting in the absence of G Campbell.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/3a APPROVED</b></p>
<p><b>b) <u>Draft Minutes of 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019</u></b></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and they were signed by the Chair.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/3b APPROVED</b></p>
<p><b>c) <u>Action Tracker for 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019</u></b></p> <p>The action (ACT 172) from the September meeting was complete.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/3c NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</b></p>	
<p>There were no matters arising.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update</b></p>	
<p><b>a) <u>Engagement</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner tabled a list of his engagements over the past three months. These included attending events on the International Day of Older Persons. He visited day centres in Mid Ulster, and attended the Dementia Friendly awards. He attended a Joint Public Health Conference, and was a keynote speaker at the British Irish Council Symposium on Housing.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b><u>Christmas Card Photography Competition</u></b></p>	
<p>The Commissioner will present a prize to the winner in Enniskillen later this month. A 2020 calendar will be made up from some entries.</p>	
<p><b><u>COPNI leaflet</u></b></p>	
<p>The Commissioner handed out the new leaflet about his powers and duties.</p>	

<p><b>b) <u>Accountability Meeting</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner welcomed B Holliday to his first meeting of the Committee. B Holliday and B Wall are now the contact points for COPNI in the DfC.</p> <p>The Accountability meeting was held on 12 November. The pension increase was confirmed.</p> <p><b>c) <u>Budget 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>H Gault reported that the DfC has given verbal confirmation that COPNI's 2020/21 opening allocation will be £1m. The Commissioner and Members welcomed this as it will allow for more business planning. The allocation letter will not be received until the new year.</p> <p>The Commissioner's first term of appointment will end in June 2020. COPNI is considering themes for the next Corporate Plan. It is planned to hold engagement events around Northern Ireland during 2020 to consult on the next Corporate Plan.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Update – Emerging Issues</b></p>	
<p><b>a) <u>Staffing Issues</u></b></p> <p>The main issue was that the two Legal Officers resigned in September and October. They both moved to higher grade posts, and E Hoy wished them well. Two solicitors were recruited from staffing agencies on a temporary basis, one of whom left after six weeks due to the emotional impact of the work. COPNI will seek to replace this person temporarily. The competition for a Legal Officer during the year was not progressed, and will be run again next year. COPNI has observed an increased complexity in legal casework since the Investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home (Home Truths) and may require an organisational review in due course. It was noted the staffing structure dates from 2012.</p> <p>The new Human Resources Manager commenced post today.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>b) <u>Senior Management Team</u></b></p> <p>The Team meets informally on a daily basis, and meets bi-monthly for formal approvals.</p> <p><b>c) <u>Finance and Expenditure 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>At the end of October COPNI had spent £7,315 less than budget. £735.14 had been received from Publisher Licensing Services from royalties for publications. The DfC has confirmed that COPNI may spend this. The budget was on target with no pressures in the projection.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 12/19/6c NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>d) <u>Quarterly Performance Report July – September 2019</u></b></p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/6d NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>e) <u>Quarterly Assurance Statement July – September 2019</u></b></p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/6e NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>f) <u>Business Plan 2019/20 – Progress on Objectives</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy reported on the objectives which will not be completed this year as follows. The following objectives have been deprioritised for 2019/20: Planning for your 3<sup>rd</sup> age; Financial Abuse – The Trusted Person; Procure and implement a media bid and stakeholder management system. There was no funding available for the recruitment of a third Policy Officer nor a legal support administrator.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/6f NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>g) <u>Complaints</u></b></p> <p>There were no complaints in the period.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>h) <u>Premises Move 2022</u></b></p> <p>The proposed relocation of bodies from Equality House to another building in Belfast has been postponed from May 2021 to 2022. The lease for Equality House has been extended from July 2021 to July 2022. E Hoy recently visited the building and was pleased to learn COPNI would have a 1:1 staff to desk ratio and access to several shared meetings rooms. However COPNI has sought assurances from the project management team that it will not be located in close proximity to certain other bodies due to concerns around security levels and confidentiality for whistleblowers. The Commissioner is writing to the Project Manager in relation to the proposal for the NI Policing Board to also take space in the building. A number of risks to physical security have been identified and the Commissioner is seeking additional assurances on potential impacts on staff and visitors.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed this new standard agenda item as it was important for the Committee to be informed of progress.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>Agenda Item 7: Draft Business Plan 2020/21</b></p> <p>An early draft of the Plan was tabled with 12 objectives. The 2020/21 year period will cover the end of the Corporate Plan 2016/20, the start of the next Corporate Plan as well as the end of the Commissioner's first term of office. Members were invited to feedback on the next drafts of the Plan. The final version will be submitted to the DfC by 31 January 2020.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/7 NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ACT173</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 8: Risk Matters</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Corporate Risk Register Quarter 3 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>The register no longer included concerns regarding financial constraints due to the increased funding received this year. E Hoy thanked the DfC for their support and highlighted COPNI's more settled financial position.</p> <p>The DfC was progressing the COPNI staff grievance regarding the salary dispute. COPNI may request a timeline at the next Accountability meeting to keep momentum on the issue.</p> <p>The investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home will formally conclude at the end of January 2020 when the Commissioner will meet with families regarding his final report (the analysis of the relevant authorities' responses to his Home Truths report in June 2018), and issue a press release.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/8a NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 9: Update from Department for Communities</b></p> <p>There was no further update from the DfC.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 10: Update from Northern Ireland Audit Office</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Report To Those Charged With Governance</u></b></p> <p>C Lowe indicated there had been minor changes to wording e.g. tenses within the report since it was brought to the Committee in October.</p> <p>The Committee approved the report.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/10a APPROVED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 11: Update from Internal Audit</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Corporate Governance Internal Audit report</u></b></p> <p>C McHugh indicated typographical errors within the report would be corrected and the report reissued to COPNI. She thanked E Hoy and H Gault for their assistance during the audit. There was an overall satisfactory assurance.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/11a NOTED</b></p>

<p>There were five Priority 3 recommendations and management had accepted these. The five recommendations were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that paperwork relating to the assessment of ARAC and its Members is signed as soon as possible.</li> <li>▪ Ensure registers of gifts are uploaded to COPNI's website immediately following presentation at each ARAC meeting.</li> <li>▪ Create an annual schedule of regular staff, management and senior management team meetings in advance of each year.</li> <li>▪ Undertake a review of risk management skills and training needs.</li> <li>▪ Document reviews of the risk register and mitigating actions to ensure decisions are clear and transparent.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee indicated they were reassured that COPNI has an effective and efficient system of corporate governance. E Hoy said she was impressed with the terms of reference for the audit and was pleased with the result. The next internal audit will be Case Management in early 2020. It was noted that a Case Management audit may not be suitable at that time, due to the changes in personnel in the Legal team, and an alternative matter may be more suitable.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 12: Audit Recommendations – Progress to date</b></p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/12 NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 13: Accountability and Financial Management Guidance Update</b></p> <p>The three items in the report were noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/13 NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 14: COPNI Updated Policies</b></p> <p><b>(a) <u>COPNI Updated Policies</u></b></p> <p>The seven policies listed in the report were noted. The Committee highlighted the robust system of policies being reviewed periodically.</p> <p><b>(b) <u>Gifts and Hospitality Policy (August 2019)</u></b></p> <p>The policy was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/14a NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 12/19/14b NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 15: Annual review of ARAC Terms of Reference</b></p> <p>It was noted there were no changes made to the Terms of Reference during its annual review. The Chair commended the quality of the papers for ARAC meetings. E Hoy thanked him for that feedback and said that it was due to E Gilmour's excellent work.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 12/19/15 NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>Agenda Item 16: Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b><u>Committee Members' Remuneration</u></b></p> <p>It was confirmed that from April 2020 Members' remuneration will increase by 1.25%, in line with the Department of Finance - Finance Director Letter FD (DOF) 09/19 'Remuneration of chairmen and members of public bodies and other fee rates'. The remuneration for a Chair's attendance at a Committee meeting will increase from £320 to £324. The remuneration for a Member's attendance at a Committee meeting will increase from £265 to £268.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 17: Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting will be held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 at 1.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 3.20pm.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

Signed:   
Chairperson

Date: 9/3/20

