

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 21 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 9.30AM IN EQUALITY HOUSE,
BELFAST**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS Gerard Campbell (Chair)
Julie Erskine
Don Mackay

IN ATTENDANCE Claire Keatinge (Commissioner, COPNI)
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)
Deborah Park (Northern Ireland Audit Office)
Amanda McMaw (ASM – Internal Audit)
Nicola Drennan (OFMDFM)
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI)
Rebecca Kelly (Administrative Officer, COPNI)

Agenda Item 1: Apologies Breidge Gadd (Member) and Gerard McKeown (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI).	NOTED
Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business a) <u>Conflict of Interests</u> No conflicts of interests were declared. b) <u>Register of Interests</u> No new interests were reported in this period. E Hoy indicated Members and senior staff last completed Register of Interest forms in June, and this was done twice per year. As per COPNI's Publication Scheme on its website, the Register of Interests is available for public inspection on request. E Hoy indicated there would be a paper on the current process brought to the next meeting for comment. c) <u>Fraud</u> No incidents of fraud were reported in this period.	NOTED NOTED ACTION COPNI (ACT 97) NOTED

<p>d) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u> The one new entry on the register was noted. It was then signed by the Chair. A copy will be put on the COPNI website.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/1a NOTED <i>(ACT 98)</i></p>
<p>e) <u>Register of International Conferences & Events</u> E Hoy confirmed this new register has been developed as a standard agenda item as per an action from the previous meeting, and that attendance by COPNI at conferences and events outside the UK and Ireland would be recorded.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/1b NOTED</p>
<p>f) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u> The record of direct award contracts during the period was noted, and E Hoy explained each of the items.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/1c NOTED</p>
<p>g) <u>Update on Annual Performance Assessments</u> The Chair advised that Annual Performance Assessments have been completed with Members, with the exception of B Gadd's assessment which is to take place 23/09/15.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>h) <u>COPNI ARAC Work Plan</u> The Chair and Members noted the proposed Work Plan for 2016/17 listed standard agenda items, ad hoc and special items for ARAC meetings throughout the year. The Chair asked if a further meeting could be added to the proposed plan; a meeting between just the Committee and auditors, at which no COPNI staff or Commissioner would be present. N Drennan indicated the next Accountability meeting will be in November 2015. The amended Work Plan will be circulated to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair requested that after consideration of the first draft of the 2016/17 COPNI Business Plan (BP) at the December meeting, further drafts are circulated to the Committee by email, in advance of the submission of the BP to the Department by 31 January 2016. E Hoy informed the Committee that work has begun on the development of a draft Corporate Plan for 2016-2020. She said that an early draft will be shared with the Committee at the December meeting for information. She explained that all Corporate Plan development is being carried out in the absence of a new Commissioner and any draft would be subject to potentially extensive changes depending on the focus a new Commissioner may wish to bring to it.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/1d</p> <p>ACTION COPNI <i>(ACT 99)</i> ACTION COPNI <i>(ACT 100)</i></p> <p>ACTION COPNI <i>(ACT 101)</i></p> <p>ACTION COPNI <i>(ACT 102)</i></p>
<p>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of the Meeting of 15 June 2015</p> <p>The minutes of the last ARAC meeting were approved by Members subject to two minor amendments on pages 3 and 6.</p> <p>The minutes were then signed by the Chair and a copy will be published on the COPNI website.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/2</p> <p>ACTION COPNI <i>(ACT 103)</i></p>

<p>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</p> <p>a) <u>Actions arising from ARAC Meeting 15 June 2015</u> All 8 actions were reported as complete by the date of the meeting. The Chair queried if budget holders had now signed assurance statements; E Hoy confirmed that they had commenced a proportionate process of budget holders signing assurance statements in relation to their budgets and that this feeds into the corporate Quarterly Performance Reports.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update – Emerging Issues</p> <p>a) <u>Engagement</u> The Commissioner gave an update on the current issues affecting her office, and highlighted she had been busy with visits to care homes and recently spoke on a radio show specifically for over 55's.</p> <p>The Domiciliary Care Summit took place on 2nd September 2015 and the event was well attended. The Commissioner highlighted that the Domiciliary Care is under extreme pressure and there are risks to older people as a result. The Commissioner is to publish the findings of the event before leaving office.</p> <p>b) <u>Recruitment and Induction</u> E Hoy advised that COPNI had recently advertised three vacancies and the competitions closed on 18/09/15. These vacancies are for Office Manager (Maternity Cover), Human Resources Manager and Communications and Engagement Manager. E Hoy added that in the interim period the temporary Human Resources Manager is performing well and the Communications & Engagement Manager post is being undertaken by a member of staff acting up. Interviews for the three posts will be held during October 2015.</p> <p>N Drennan noted that she would look into the arrangement to cover the Office Manager post to ensure that the organisation isn't adding to the approved headcount by seeking maternity cover.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/3</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>c) <u>2015/2016 Post June Monitoring Round Budget</u> Following the outcome of the June Monitoring Round E Hoy indicated the budget had been re-profiled and COPNI was able to continue with the Business Plan. While the June Monitoring Round did not reduce the opening budget allocation COPNI would now be required to fund increased Employer's Pension Contributions. OFMDFM had previously indicated that additional resource would be made available to fund this addition cost. Therefore this had the effect of reducing COPNI's budget by £12k.</p> <p>E Hoy indicated that as the Commissioner leaves in November there would a one off additional financial resource available during the</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/3a</p> <p>NOTED</p>

2015/16 business year arising from wages that would have been paid. N Drennan confirmed COPNI did not require approval to use this additional resource and that the recruitment process usually takes six months.

The Chair asked for an update on the proposed change of Sponsoring Department outlined in the proposals for Public Sector Reform. E Hoy confirmed that NICCY and COPNI had undertaken a series of conversations with OFMDFM. E Hoy confirmed that NICCY and COPNI proposed that the equality family would stay within OFMDFM in the short term with a proposal for new primary legislation to transfer sponsorship of both bodies to the NI Assembly in the longer term.

The Commissioner noted the merits in remaining independent from other departments. E Hoy confirmed that this proposal has been suggested to Ministers. The Commissioner highlighted the difficulty in COPNI's ability to plan its work while being an efficient and effective champion of Older People when the budget was regularly being changed.

d) 2015/16 Finance and Expenditure

E Hoy indicated that the budget variances reflect the prudence that COPNI had been asked to exercise until the JMR results were known. E Hoy added that the 8% variance in salaries reflects the Admin Officer post which COPNI did not fill and the salary saved whilst the Commissioner's post is vacant.

Members discussed the budget and added that there was a slight overspend at the end of August however the annual budget is still on target to break even by March 2016. E Hoy said that, due to the interregnum between the Commissioner leaving post and the appointment of a new Commissioner, the budget is now at increased risk of underspend. However, the SMT has approved the spending of the outstanding annual salary (Nov-Mar 2015/16) to programme and she is confident that the money will be spent. E Hoy highlighted that this unusual financial year is masking the inadequacy of the COPNI baseline budget and she is very concerned about further cuts to the budget and the capacity of the organisation to meet even the most basic of its statutory functions.

e) Quarterly Performance Report

E Hoy reported that the 2015/16 Business Plan's addendum was approved by OFMDFM on 18/09/15. All projects are on target and they have all been delivered as planned this year, on time and within budget.

Sick leave is minimal and well within target thresholds. The staff pay remit has been approved for 2014/15 and paid to staff. COPNI is awaiting the process for 2015/16.

**ARAC 09/15/3b
NOTED**

**ARAC 09/15/3c
NOTED**

f) Accountability Meeting

E Hoy reported that the Accountability meeting was to take place the following day. The transition plan for the Commissioner and the extension of the MOTO beyond 31st March 2016 will be discussed

The Chair asked N Drennan how the meetings are going for OFMDFM. N Drennan confirmed they are going well and all relevant matters between COPNI and OFMDFM are covered. N Drennan affirmed that the meetings are positive and all relevant matters are addressed.

NOTED

g) Senior Management Team

E Hoy advised that Management Accounts, the Annual Report and Accounts, Transition planning, Domiciliary Care and the End of Term Event are the main items under consideration by the Senior Management Team Meeting.

NOTED

h) Complaints

E Hoy referred to the paper on a complaint about a case which commenced in February 2012. It was originally a complaint against the office of the Older People's Advocate, which then evolved into a complaint against COPNI. COPNI had made a significant effort to assist the complainant, including numerous attempts to meet face to face however this was not accepted. COPNI had now given a final response to the complainant which has not been appealed.

A McMaw confirmed ASM will be looking into complaints handling during its Internal Audit in January 2016.

ARAC 09/15/3d

i) Transition Plan: Change of Commissioner 2015/16

The Commissioner indicated the plan has been implemented and received good feedback from stakeholders.

The Chair asked N Drennan if she was happy with the plan. N Drennan reported that this was OFMDFM's first sight of the plan but that it appeared to be in order. She advised that the recruitment and selection process for a new Commissioner has commenced and the likely time frame for the process would be four to six months. She added that training is being arranged for the selected interview panel. She was not able to advise of a date on which the advertisement of the post would be published.

There was a discussion on how COPNI's external communications will be handled during the period of the Commissioner's post being vacant. E Hoy confirmed she was taking refresher media training, and would be responsible for this area. However she was more concerned about the ability of COPNI to exercise its statutory powers

ARAC 09/15/3e

ACTION

<p>and duties. She said that she would be discussing this with and seeking clarity from OFMDFM.</p> <p>The Chair queried if it was confirmed that E Hoy would be the Accounting Officer in the interim. N Drennan indicated that there has been no confirmation of E Hoy acting into this role. E Hoy indicated that she would seek clarity at the upcoming Accountability meeting.</p>	<p>COPNI (ACT 104)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Update from OFMDFM</p> <p>N Drennan reported all updates from OFMDFM were covered by the agenda.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 7: Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31/03/15</p> <p>The Chair was content that the 15/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements was clear.</p> <p>N Drennan queried if the Commissioner's pension figure on page 37 was correct. D Park confirmed NIAO would be looking at the figures.</p> <p>E Hoy reported that the governance statement articulates ARAC, ongoing performance, SMT and Business Continuity Plan. The Chair asked for a copy of Payroll and ICT assurances to be circulated to Members.</p> <p>All Members were content with the report to date. D Park asked that COPNI make sure all DFP requirements are included.</p> <p>The Chair asked E Hoy to take the Committee through the draft Financial Statements. No outstanding matters arise from the review.</p> <p>The Annual Report and Accounts will be presented to the NIAO. The Chair asked that if significant changes are made following NIAO's fieldwork prior to the December meeting, that Members are notified.</p> <p>The Chair passed on thanks to E Hoy and G McKeown for their work.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/4</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 105)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 8: Update from NIAO</p> <p>D Park reported that the Audit fieldwork will be carried out after the final draft of the Annual Report and Financial Statements are submitted. The Chair queried the timescale of the Audit. D Park confirmed that NIAO will be on site from 28 September to begin fieldwork with the intention of completing NIAO management reviews during November to allow the Audit and Comptroller General to issue his report during December.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION</p>

<p>The Chair noted that the Commissioner's name was mentioned as the Accounting Officer throughout the Annual Report. D Park indicated that this should be updated to the acting Accounting Officer throughout before signing off.</p> <p>The Report to those Charged with Governance will be received by COPNI in advance of the December ARAC meeting and will form part of the agenda of that meeting.</p>	<p>COPNI (ACT 106)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9: Update from Internal Audit</p> <p>A McMaw referred to the 15/16 Internal Audit Plan; corporate governance and risk management will be reviewed at the end of January, followed by procurement in early February. Reports of these internal audits will be brought to the March meeting of ARAC. Some Follow Up Review fieldwork was undertaken last week, and the report covering this will be brought to the December ARAC meeting.</p> <p>The Commissioner commended the professional approach of ASM, NIAO and COPNI staff during her term and thanked everyone involved.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Audit Recommendations</p> <p>E Hoy reported that the red status on one item in the tracker related to an outstanding recommendation that COPNI asks OFMDFM to agree to a timetable for the approval (by Ministers) of the annual Business Plan. E Hoy explained that such agreement hasn't been possible but that she would raise the matter at the Accountability meeting the following day with a view to agreeing a form of words in a revised MSFM that would allow the revision of this recommendation to a green status.</p> <p>All Members were content.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/5</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 107)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: Risk Matters</p> <p>a) <u>Corporate Risk Strategy 2015/16</u> The Chair requested that the Accounting Officer sign the Executive Summary.</p> <p>b) <u>Corporate Risk Register 2015/16 Quarter 2</u></p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/6a ACTION COPNI (ACT 108)</p> <p>ARAC 09/15/6b</p>

<p>The Chair noted that all risks had been covered within the agenda. A Member noted how clear the summary page is and that it works well. E Hoy noted that COPNI's main concern remains around the capacity of work that can be carried out due to financial constraints.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 12: Update on Business Continuity Plan</p> <p>Members noted that there had been some small changes to the Business Continuity Plan and an updated copy was supplied to those charged with Governance during July.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/7 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Update on DAO and DFD Guidance</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/8 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 14: Summary of Key Issues from Public Accounts Committee Reports</p> <p>There were no issues applicable to COPNI during the period.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/15/9 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 15: Any Other Business</p> <p>The Commissioner indicated that this was her last ARAC meeting and wanted to thank everyone individually. She wished all members the very best in the ongoing work of COPNI. She thanked the Chair and Members for their exemplary role and the excellent guidance and advice they had provided.</p> <p>The Chair, on behalf of the ARAC, formally thanked the Commissioner and expressed the Committee's view that she had been a pleasure to work with both professionally and personally. In addition, the Chair said that the Commissioner had done a great job championing the rights of older people within a difficult financial constraints of the organisation.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 16: Dates of Next Meeting</p> <p>a) <u>Monday 7 December 2015 at 9.30am</u></p> <p>b) <u>2016 & 2017 ARAC Meeting Dates</u> Members would consider the proposed dates for agreement at the next meeting.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 11.45am.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 09/15/10</p>

Signed:


Chalperson

Date:

7/12/15

