

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 4 MARCH 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)
Monica Fitzpatrick (Department for Communities)
Ciaran Cunningham (Department for Communities)
Clare Lowe (Northern Ireland Audit Office)
Brian Clerkin (ASM – Internal Audit)
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI)

<p>Agenda Item 1: Apologies</p> <p>There were no apologies. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular welcomed M Fitzpatrick and C Lowe to their first meeting of the Committee. Members acknowledged the contribution of Peter O'Sullivan (NIAO) to the Committee during the last two years.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</p> <p>a) <u>Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>The Chair indicated that he is the Chief Executive of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and he confirmed that ASM have been appointed by the NIAO to undertake the statutory external audit of CCMS on their (NIAO's) behalf.</p> <p>b) <u>Fraud</u></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p> <p>c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u></p> <p>The four items were noted and it was signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/2c APPROVED</p>

<p>d) <u>Register of International Conferences & Events</u></p> <p>There were no items for this period.</p> <p>e) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u></p> <p>The three items were noted.</p> <p>f) <u>Whistleblowing</u></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/2e NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of Meetings & Action Tracker</p>	
<p>a) <u>Draft Minutes of 3rd December 2018</u></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and they were signed by the Chair.</p> <p>b) <u>Action Tracker for 3rd December 2018</u></p> <p>The three actions were complete.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/3a APPROVED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/3b NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</p>	
<p>There were no matters arising.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update</p>	
<p>a) <u>Engagement</u></p> <p>In December, the Commissioner spoke at the International Symposium on Loneliness in Belfast. COPNI held an event at the Ulster Museum entitled 'Social isolation as we age'. It was attended by 60 older people and there were useful discussions on isolation and loneliness. Follow up workshops will be held in Enniskillen and Derry/Londonderry during March 2019, to ensure the views of as many older people as possible are taken. In January, the Commissioner spoke at meetings of the University of the 3rd Age (U3A), Young at Heart and NIPSA Retired Members. In February, he gave presentations at meetings of Unite the Union and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. He also spoke at the launch of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Age Friendly Strategy.</p> <p>The Commissioner had useful meetings with the independent review team established by the Department of Health in relation to their work on the circumstances that led to the findings of the Home Truths investigation.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

<p>COPNI now attends Regulation and Oversight Forum meetings three times a year. This forum is comprised of a range of Commissioners from human rights compliance bodies, the Chief Executives of regulatory bodies and the NI Public Services Ombudsman.</p> <p>COPNI supported the Irish News initiative of providing complimentary newspapers for customers to take to an older neighbour.</p> <p>COPNI has not been contacted by older people with specific concerns about the impact of Brexit, however it is aware that a decrease in EU migrant workers may negatively impact on the local care sector.</p> <p>The Commissioner and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales may request to meet jointly with the BBC regarding its consultation on the removal of free TV Licences for people over 75 years of age.</p> <p>b) <u>Accountability Meeting</u></p> <p>The Accountability meeting was held on 22 January 2019 and focused on the baseline budget. On 31 January COPNI submitted its Business Plan for 2019/20 which was fully costed at £1,025,000.</p> <p>c) <u>Budget 2018/19</u></p> <p>DfC has appointed an independent person (James Gilchrist, Strategic Investment Board associate) to examine COPNI's baseline funding. COPNI had very productive meetings with him in February, and a draft report will be available this month.</p> <p>M Fitzpatrick indicated that, in line with the requirements of Outcomes Based Accountability, there will be an increased onus on Arms' Length Bodies to provide the evidence base of need for the work they carry out and therefore the budgets required.</p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that the draft business plan submitted to the DfC contained such information and that the further paper submitted after discussion with Mr Gilchrist provided additional information on context, proposed outputs and outcomes and evidence of the need for the work proposed.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Update – Emerging Issues</p> <p>a) <u>Staffing Issues</u></p> <p>Three new staff commenced their posts during January: the Communications and Engagement Manager and two Policy and Research Officers. An additional Policy Officer is on secondment from the NI Assembly. Recruitment will commence soon for the two administration posts which are currently filled by temporary staff. Two further posts, which were approved in COPNI's original headcount, have</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

never been filled due to budget constraints: these are administration support for the Legal Team, and a third Policy and Research Officer. The proposed recruitment of these posts has been included in the 2019-20 Business Plan, awaiting approval by DfC.

The Legal Team are under significant pressure at present with work relating to the Commissioner's consideration of the Relevant Authorities' responses to findings and recommendations in the Home Truths report. This is creating delays in the management of casework. It was also acknowledged that, due to staff leaving during 2018, some corporate knowledge and expertise gained throughout the Home Truths investigation has been lost. This places additional pressure on the remaining investigation officers.

The Commissioner will present the staff's briefing paper on the single pay point dispute to the DfC Permanent Secretary. NICS HR will carry out a grading and loading exercise for some posts, starting with the Chief Executive.

b) Senior Management Team

Following the Internal Audit of Performance Management, changes have been made to the timing of the regular cycle of staff and SMT meetings. All meetings i.e. SMT, Management Team and full team meetings will now be held every other month, instead of monthly. The management accounts continue to be reviewed and approved by the Accounting Officer and Chief Executive every month.

c) Finance and Expenditure 2018/19

It was noted that as at 31 January 2019 there was a projected underspend of £14,000 at year end. DfC allocated an additional £34,000 in January, £24,000 of which was ring-fenced for the Investigation Expert Panel. It is anticipated that £10,000 of that £24,000 cannot be spent on the Expert Panel before the year end, due to the lateness of the approval of the funding and the ability to schedule work with the experts in the remaining two months of the financial year. DfC is aware of the easement of that £10,000.

d) Quarterly Performance Report October – December 2018

E Hoy highlighted the situation has moved on since the QPR to December, due to DfC funding approved in January.

e) Quarterly Assurance Statement October – December 2018

E Hoy indicated procurement for the Internal Audit service has begun. CPD charges (for procurement exceeding £5,000) were discussed.

NOTED

ARAC 03/19/6c
NOTED

ARAC 03/19/6d
NOTED

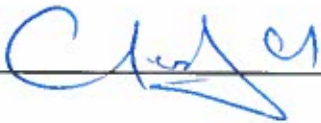
ARAC 03/19/6e
NOTED

<p>may improve the high staff turnover situation. B Clerkin highlighted three risk areas which other organisations are considering: the impact of Brexit, IT security and GDPR, and the inability to plan in a volatile environment. E Hoy confirmed the third risk is covered in Risk 2 and that consideration will be given to the other two matters at the next Risk Management meeting.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 9: Update from Department for Communities</p> <p>There was nothing further to report by DfC.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Update from Northern Ireland Audit Office</p> <p>a) <u>Letter from NIAO to Commissioner (dated 21st February 2019)</u></p> <p>It was noted that responsibility for COPNI's audit has transferred from Peter O'Sullivan to Catherine O'Hagan.</p> <p>b) <u>2018-19 Audit Strategy (issued 21st February 2019)</u></p> <p>C Lowe indicated the basis for overall materiality calculation (prior year total expenditure) is £876,272. The overall account materiality (2%) is £17,525, and the error reporting threshold is £1,000. The Audit Approach was noted, with the following staff being responsible: Catherine O'Hagan (Engagement Director), Clare Lowe (Engagement Manager) and Andrew Moore (Lead Auditor). COPNI will provide draft financial statements to NIAO around 2 September 2019. The estimated audit fee is unlikely to exceed £8,750, and will be discussed with SMT later in the process.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/10a NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/10b NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: Update from Internal Audit</p> <p>a) <u>Business Planning</u></p> <p>Satisfactory assurance was given for the existing risk management, controls and governance in place for business planning. There were two priority 2 recommendations and two priority 3 recommendations. All were accepted by management, with timeframes of January and March 2019.</p> <p>b) <u>Programme and Project Management</u></p> <p>Satisfactory assurance was given for the systems in place. There were two priority 3 recommendations, both of which were accepted by management, with a timeframe of June 2019.</p> <p>c) <u>Follow Up</u></p> <p>18 recommendations were reviewed in the Follow Up Review. 16 were fully implemented, one was partially implemented and one was unable</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/11a NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/11b NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/11c NOTED</p>

<p>to be tested. ASM will provide a letter of assurance to COPNI in early April 2019.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 12: Audit Recommendations – Progress to date</p> <p>The seven recommendations were noted: four were implemented and three were still within their target period.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/12 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Accountability and Financial Management Guidance Update</p> <p>The four items in the report were noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/13 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 14: COPNI Updated Policies</p> <p>The 11 policies listed in the report were noted.</p> <p>a) <u>Financial Manual</u></p> <p>The new version (December 2018) was noted.</p> <p>b) <u>Procurement Policy and Procedures</u></p> <p>The new version (November 2018) was noted. CPD charges (for procurement exceeding £5,000) were discussed.</p> <p>M Fitzpatrick highlighted these applied to all of the Civil Service and Arms' Length Bodies. DfC was content to pass any concerns from COPNI to the Department of Finance on request.</p> <p>c) <u>Scheme of Delegation</u></p> <p>The new version (December 2018) was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/14 NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/14a NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/14b NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/14c NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 15: Business Continuity Plan</p> <p>a) <u>Business Continuity Plan Review (February 2019)</u></p> <p>This was noted.</p> <p>b) <u>Business Continuity Plan (Revised February 2019)</u></p> <p>This was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/15a NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/19/15b NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 16: Schedule of Meetings for 2019/20</p> <p>The schedule was approved, including the October 2019 meeting.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/19/16 APPROVED</p>

Agenda Item 17: Any Other Business There was no other business.	NOTED
Agenda Item 18: Date of next meeting The next meeting will be held on Monday 3 rd June 2019 at 1.30pm. The meeting closed at 3.20pm.	NOTED

Signed:
Chairperson



Date:

3/6/19.
