



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE 23rd MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 10.30AM AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA

Present: Bill Smith, Chairperson
Alan Henry
Geraldine Rice

In attendance: Peter O'Neill, Chief Executive
Lorraine Hamill, Finance Supervisor
Don Leeson, Head of Corporate Services
Brian Clerkin, Internal Auditor, ASM
Laura Murphy, Northern Ireland Audit Office (agenda item 3)

Apologies: Ann Hope
Eamonn O'Neill

1. Minutes of the previous meetings (11 June 2010)

- 1.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 11 June 2010 were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Committee noted that it is unlikely that the Northern Ireland Office will appoint any new Commissioners until 2011 and therefore membership of the Committee will remain unchanged for the time being (paragraph 2.1 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

2.2 The Committee noted that further feedback has been received from NIPSA on the revised ICT Policies and Procedures. This will be assessed and finalised by the Head of Communications and Education and Head of Corporate Services, and then submitted to the Audit and Risk Management Committee for approval (paragraph 2.2 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

**Action: Head of Communications and Education /
Head of Corporate Services**

2.3 Changes to the draft Internal Complaints Policy, which will incorporate the Grievance Procedure and Dignity at Work policy, have been discussed at the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) meeting. The draft policy now needs to be risk assessed in the light of recent complaints taken under the antecedent policies to ensure that it is robust, and will be submitted to the next Audit and Risk Management Committee for approval (paragraph 2.4 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).

Action: Head of Corporate Services

2.4 In line with the Committee's policy of continuous improvement, the Audit and Risk Management Committee agreed to benchmark its work and approach against the practice of the Office of the Police Ombudsman. The Head of Corporate Services will contact his counterpart to arrange a meeting between the Chairs of the respective committees (paragraph 13.4 of the previous minutes refers).

Action: Head of Corporate Services

3. Annual Report and Accounts 2009–10: Report to Those Charged with Governance

3.1 The draft Report to Those Charged with Governance on the outcome of the audit of the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts for 2009–10 was presented to the Committee. The Committee noted that there was an outstanding issue to be resolved in respect of the fair value of leasehold improvements. Any changes to the accounts resulting from this will be circulated to the Committee.

Action: Head of Corporate Services

- 3.2** Apart from this technical matter, it was noted that only three minor issues had been identified by the audit and the Committee expressed their appreciation to the Corporate Services Team for their work in preparing the accounts and dealing with the audit.

4. Internal Audit

Progress in implementing Internal Audit recommendations

- 4.1 The Committee noted that the two outstanding recommendations, which related to the Commission's legal services, have been completed and signed-off by the Legal Committee.

Internal Audit Plan for 2010-11

- 4.2 The Committee noted the arrangements for the forthcoming internal audit which is due to take place week commencing 15 November 2010.

Internal Audit arrangements from 2011

- 4.3 The Committee noted that, while this is the last year of the current contract with ASM for internal audit services, there is an option to extend it for a further year, at the discretion of the Northern Ireland Office. The situation will be kept under review.

Action: Head of Corporate Services

5. Code of Governance

- 5.1 The Committee reviewed the revised draft Code of Governance and proposed a number of changes, which will be considered at the next Commission meeting.

Action: Chief Executive

- 5.2 It was noted that, in parallel with work on the main body of the Code, Ann Hope and the Head of Corporate Services are developing an appendix to it which deals with the applicability of the Commission's human resource management policies to Commissioners.

Action: Ann Hope / Head of Corporate Services

6. Information Assurance Policy

- 6.1 The Committee approved the revised draft Information Assurance Policy for implementation.

Action: Chief Executive

7. Skills audit of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

- 7.1 Proposed learning and development for the Committee were approved. It was agreed to include refresher training on risk management, and the terminology used in accounts, should be organised for Committee members in due course.

Action: Head of Corporate Services

- 7.2 Committee members agreed to complete a skills audit, which will inform future development activities.

Action: Committee members

8. Finance Report

- 8.1 The Committee reviewed the expenditure to the end of August 2010.

9. Corporate Risk Management

- 9.1 The Committee reviewed the Risk Register and the progress of actions to minimise the risks identified.

- 9.2 It was noted that the risk in respect of machinery of Government changes impacting on the Commission's sponsoring department appeared to be diminishing and will be reviewed again in the light of the outcome of the Spending Review, which will be announced on 20 October 2010.

Action: Head of Corporate Services

10. Register of Interests for 2010–11

- 10.1 The Committee noted the Register of Interests for 2010-11.

11. Contracts

- 11.1 The Committee noted that there had been no single tender action over £5,000 for the period April–September 2010.

- 11.2 The Committee reviewed the information made on purchases over £1,000 for the period April–September 2010.

12. Expenses of the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive

- 12.1 The Committee reviewed the expenses of the Chief Commissioner for the period April–June 2010.

- 12.2 The Committee noted that there were no expenses for the Chief Executive.

13. International events

- 13.1 The Committee noted that no international visits had been undertaken to date in 2010–11.

14. Date of next meeting

- 14.1 Given the rescheduling of the September 2010 Committee meeting to accommodate the Northern Ireland Audit Office, it was agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 25 October 2010.
- 14.2 The next meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee will take place on 15 December 2010 at 10.30am.