



**12 December 2024**

## **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee held in the offices of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

**Alfred House, 19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED (Note: some members attended virtually via Microsoft Teams)**

**Present:** Sean Donaghy, Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Management Committee  
David Lavery CB, Commissioner  
Helen Henderson, Commissioner

**In Attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)  
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and Communications)  
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer  
Darren Veighey, Administrative Officer  
Mark Lawther, Ernst & Young (EY)  
Caoimhe Devine, Ernst & Young (EY)  
Elaine Manak, National Audit Office (NAO)  
Liz Fox, National Audit Office (NAO)

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from:  
Stephen White, Commissioner

Colin Caughey, Director (Advice to Government, Research and Investigations)  
Philip Whitehead, Sumer NI

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

## **3. Chairperson's Business**

3.1 The Chairperson had nothing to report other than to congratulate Commissioners and staff in relation to the Annual Statement event at Stormont on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024. This was a very successful event with positive engagement from stakeholders.

## **4. Minutes of the meetings held on 19 June 2024**

4.1 The final minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 19 June 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 19 June 2024**

5.1 There were no matters arising.

## **6. Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) Report**

6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the Finance reports for October 2024 for Core and Dedicated Mechanism and provided an update on the financial projections for the period end November 2024.

6.2 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the statement of high value purchases for the period 1 June-31 October 2024.

- 6.3 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the prompt payment performance to date for 2024/25 against the government target of 90% of undisputed and valid invoices within five working days (99.4%).
- 6.4 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented absence statistics for period ending 31 October 2024. Two members of staff are currently on long term sickness absence.
- 6.6 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported on organisational recruitment. Both Jacqueline McClintock and Darren Veighey were made permanent in their posts of Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Officer and Administrative Assistant respectively from 01 October 2024.

In addition, Tara Grace Connolly joined the Commission in August 2024 as Engagement and Communications Officer.

Interviews have taken place for the Digital Communications Assistant and two Policy and Research Officer posts.

The recruitment process of Executive Assistant to the Chief Commissioner will begin in the new year.

## **7. Corporate Risk Register**

- 7.1 The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed.

## **8. Freedom of Information Requests**

- 8.1 It was reported that 17 Freedom of Information Requests had been received between April-October 2024. The Director (Engagement and Communications) reported that nothing unusual had been requested.

**Claire Martin left the Committee meeting**

## **9. Chief Executive Report**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive reported that the Chief Commissioner had been reappointed to the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) Board and appointed as Secretary to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutes (GANHRI). In addition, the Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) was reappointed as Chair of the Finance Committee for ENNHRI. Both were congratulated by the Commission. He added that these appointments will raise the profile of the Commission.
- 9.2 The Chief Executive also reported that he expected an uplift in financial resources for the Commission following the recent independent economic review is currently with the Northern Ireland Office and will go to the Secretary of State.

## **10. National Audit Office-Audit Planning Report**

- 10.1 EY Engagement Partner Mark Lawther presented the Audit Planning Report for the 2024-25 financial statements audit.

## **11. Internal Audit Update (Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2024/25)**

- 11.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported on the Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2024/25. Sumer NI are currently contracted with the Commission until the end of March 2025.
- 11.2 The Cyber Security (NI) contract also concludes at end of March 2025 (a tender process is to be organised through the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) in January 2025).
- 11.3 The internal audit for IT and Financial Systems will be conducted in February/March 2025.

## **12. International Travel April-August 2024**

- 12.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the International Travel costs update for April-August 2024.

## 13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 The Commission was granted an extension to submit its Annual Equality Scheme Progress Report which will be submitted to ECNI as soon as possible.
- 13.2 It was reported that the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) and Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Officer had attended GDPR training.
- 13.3 The Chief Executive reported a review of NIO internal operations was underway, with the proposal to reflect a more streamlined approach of staff relations with the Commission.
- 13.4 The Chairperson wished everyone a Happy Christmas.