



**18 September 2025**

## **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  
Helen Henderson (Online)  
Stephen White (Online)

**In Attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)  
Rhyannon Blythe, Director of Legal Services  
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement & Communications) (Online)  
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer  
Darren Veighey, Administrative Officer  
Aidan Dummigan, Ernst & Young (EY) (Online)  
Elaine Manak, National Audit Office (NAO)  
Stephen Torney, Northern Ireland Office (NIO) (Online)

**Apologies:** **David Lavery**

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

1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 1.2 Apologies were received from Commissioner David Lavery and Mark Lawther, Ernst and Young.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## 3. Chairman's business

- 3.1 The Chairperson informed the Committee he had recently met with Les Philipott, Chair and Fiona Ross, Non-Executive Director of the NIO's Audit and Risk Management Committee as part their annual review.
- 3.2 The Chairperson also informed members that he had dealt with a complaint from a member of the public. The complaint was not upheld.

## 4. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2025

- 4.1 The final minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 16 June 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

**Action: Approved Minutes of 16 June 2025 to be uploaded to the Commission's website.**

## 5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 16 June 2025

- 5.1 There were no matters arising.

## 6. Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Update

- 6.1 The Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Officer presented an overview of the following reports:
- Finance Reports for August 2025 for Core and Dedicated Mechanism
  - Absence Statistics for Period ended 31 August 2025
  - High Value Purchases 1 June 2025-31 August 2025
- 6.2 It was noted that an Internal Audit Recommendations tracker has been drawn up to keep Committee members updated on progress.
- 6.3 The internal audit tender has been issued with a closing date of Friday 3 October 2025. The successful provider will be notified by Friday 17 October 2025.
- 6.4 Commissioner Henderson enquired as to the IT tender project. It was confirmed that the process had recently been finalised with the successful provider being Cyber Security NI.
- 6.5 It was noted that the Commission planned to recruit a staff officer for the finance team and a Grade 7 for the Communications team.
- 6.6 The Committee members were informed that the Commission has received two subject access requests this financial year. We requested an extension to one of the requests due to the volume of data the Commission retains on the individual – a response is currently being finalised. The second request is being considered and is due to be responded to by the end of September 2025.
- 6.7 It was noted that prompt payment of invoices in the accounting period 2025-26 had, to date, exceeded the government target of 90% (within 5 working days).
- 6.8 Michael Clements joined the Commission in July as a Solicitor (Legal and Research).

The recruitment process for two Deputy Principal Policy and Research Officers closed on 17 September.

- 6.9 The Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 were laid in Parliament on Thursday 10 July 2025.
- 6.10 The Commission submitted its Annual Monitoring Return in May 2025 and is currently finalising its Annual Equality Scheme Progress Report for submission to the Equality Commission NI.

## **7. Corporate Risk Register**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the current Corporate Risk Register.

## **8. Freedom of Information requests May-Aug 2025**

- 8.1 Details of Freedom of Information requests from May-August 2025 were presented by the Director (Engagement and Communications).

## **9. Oral update from Chief Executive**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive reported that the Business Case for period 2025-29 was currently being drafted and would be brought before the Committee in due course.
- 9.2 The Chief Commissioner has written to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding the outcome of the recent Spending Review which addressed some of the concerns raised by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) and United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The letter also highlighted the need for the

Commission to amend its Pay Policy as outlined in the recent Independent Review and Baseline Budget Review.

## **10. NAO Update**

10.1 Nothing to report.

## **11. Policy for granting legal assistance & Legal Process 2025**

11.1 The Committee reviewed and approved the Commission's Legal Process on how requests from members of the public are dealt with and the Policy for Granting Legal Assistance.

## **12. International travel April-August 2025**

12.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) provided an overview of International Travel from April to August 2025.

## **13. Expenses of Chief Commissioner**

13.1 The expenses of the Chief Commissioner were noted and approved by the Committee.

## **14. Cyber Governance Training**

14.1 It was noted that it would be beneficial for Cyber Governance Training to be undertaken by senior staff and Commissioners/Audit Committee members which would be followed by an effectiveness review.

It was proposed and agreed that the Chairperson, Chief Executive and Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) would complete the training in the first instance.

## **15. Any other business**

15.1 There being no other business the meeting closed at 11.25am.

## **16. Date of next meeting**

16.1 The date of next meeting was arranged for Monday 15 December 2025 at 2.00pm.

**The meeting ended at 11:25am**