



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

15 December 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
Stephen White
David Lavery

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement & Communications)
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer
Darren Veighey, Administrative Officer (Minutes)
Aidan Dummigan, Ernst & Young (EY) (Online)
Mark Lawther, Ernst & Young (EY)
Chris Telford (SCC Chartered Accountants)
Sean Cavanagh (SCC Chartered Accountants)
Liz Fox, National Audit Office (NAO) (Online)
Stephen Torney, Northern Ireland Office (NIO) (Online)

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Elaine Manak, (NAO) and Colin Caughey, Director of Policy (Advice to Government, Research, Investigations and International Treaties).

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's business

- 3.1 The Chairperson reported that he had attended the Commission Board meeting that morning and that he had discussed with Commissioners the following points:
 - The Chairperson to provide six-monthly formal updates to the Commission board.
 - Succession planning in relation to membership of ARMC.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2025

- 4.1 The final minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 18 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

Action: Approved Minutes of 18 September 2025 to be uploaded to the Commission's website.

5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 18 September 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 October 2025 for Core and Dedicated Mechanism
- Absence Statistics for Period ended 30 November 2025
- High Value Purchases 1 September 2025-31 October 2025

6.2 Megan McDermott joined the Commission on 24 November 2025 as a Policy and Research Officer (Dedicated Mechanism). Two further Policy and Research Officers for Core are due to start in the first quarter of 2026.

It was noted that recruitment for the Finance Officer and Senior Engagement and Communications Officer has been completed with successful candidates notified of the outcome.

6.3 It was noted that SCC Chartered Accountants were successful in the internal audit tender.

6.4 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 and was currently 99.1%.

6.5 It was noted that the Commission had received four subject access requests since 1 April 2025. All have been responded to within the timescale.

7. Corporate Risk Register

7.1 The Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) provided an overview of the current risk register, highlighting any updates that had been made since the last meeting.

7.2 It was agreed that the inherent rating for failure to have an appropriate public profile and staffing capacity should be changed from critical to high.

Action: Inherent rating to be changed from critical to high.

8. Freedom of Information requests September-October 2025

- 8.1 Details of Freedom of Information requests from September 25-October 25 were presented by the Director (Engagement and Communications).

9. Oral update from Chief Executive

- 9.1 The Chief Executive was happy that staff numbers in general were growing, however he was still concerned that all objectives going forward may not be met (economic baseline review) given the projected shortfall in funding from government. It was decided that progress should be noted in the risk register, whilst recognising that funding would remain below the minimum level of recommended.
- 9.2 It was noted that work had commenced on drafting the Business Plan for 2026-27.
- 9.3 It was stated that one request for internal review in response to FOI request had been received.
- 9.4 The Chief Executive reported that the Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) and himself had met with the recently appointed internal auditors to discuss the mapping exercise for the pay policy, as agreed with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). A draft report should be available in early January 2026 which will then be shared with NIPSA, the Commission's recognised Trade Union. The Chief Executive will meet with all staff on an individual basis to discuss the process and Commissioners will be kept updated on progress. The outcome will be shared with the NIO for consideration and to seek necessary approval from the Secretary of State.
- 9.5 Members were also updated in relation to the legal proceedings commenced by Gary Murray regarding public comments made by the Chief Commissioner on legacy.

On 3 December 2025, the Judge adjourned the hearing and encouraged the appellant to use the Commission's complaints process.

The complaint has subsequently been received and will be responded to by mid-January 2026.

10. National Audit Office Update

- 10.1 The audit planning report on the 2025-2026 financial statements audit update was presented by Mark Lawther and Aidan Dummigan (EY).

11. Internal Audit Update

- 11.1 Chris Telford (SCC) presented the draft internal audit plan for 2025-2028 and the draft internal audit charter.

12. Expenses of Chief Executive

- 12.1 The expenses of the Chief Executive were noted and approved by the Committee.

13. Any other business

- 15.1 The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.