

23 September 2019

## **Minutes of the Audit & Risk Management Committee Meeting**

Present:

Joe McKnight, Chairperson

Helen Ferguson

Eddie Rooney

Graham Shields

David Russell, Chief Executive

Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)

Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant (Minutes)

Tim Johnston, NIO

Jonathan McNeill, Ernst Young

Neal Taylor, Grant Thornton

Paul Keane, NAO (by phone)

Julia Stella, Boardroom Apprentice

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

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 There were no apologies.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

## **3. Chairman's Business**

- 3.1 The Chairman reported on his attendance at the Commission board meeting on 27 August 2019, where he presented on the work of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

## **4. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2019**

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 19 June 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **5. Matters arising from 19 June 2019**

- 5.1 The move to Account NI is ongoing. There have been significant problems with the roll out that are currently being addressed (item 5.1 of the June minutes refers).
- 5.2 Following the Independent Mechanism meeting, it was agreed that it would not be possible to have a disabilities reference group due to financial constraints. However, it was agreed that people with disabilities would be invited to attend the Independent Mechanism meetings. The Mechanism committee members will keep a watching brief on attendance and will report back to the Committee any feedback from participants (item 5.2 of the June minutes refers).
- 5.3 The risk relating to the appointment/re-appointments of the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners has been added to the Corporate Risk Register (item 5.4 of the March minutes refers).
- 5.4 The report on the GDPR audit has not yet been received. A conference call has been arranged for this week and an update will be provided to the Committee (item 5.5 of the March minutes refers).
- 5.5 Grant Thornton are to report back on what items need to be recorded on the Gifts and Hospitality Register (item 13.2 of the March minutes refers and 5.6 of the June minutes refers).

**Action: Grant Thornton to report back before the next meeting.**

5.6 Training on the Managing Unacceptable Behaviour from Members of the Public policy is being sourced. There has been one incident of unacceptable behaviour to report (item 5.7 of the June minutes refers).

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

- **Financial Expenditure as at 31 August 2019:**

6.1 The Director provided an overview of the financial report to 31 August 2019.

6.2 The Director reported that the Commission has still not received formal confirmation of the budget for 2019-20. It is anticipated that the formal confirmation will be issued this week.

6.3 The Committee noted that the Business Plan for 2019-20 had still not been published due to the lack of formal confirmation of the budget.

- **High Value Purchases as at 18 September 2019:**

6.4 The Committee noted and discussed the High Value Purchases to 18 September 2019.

6.5 The Committee noted that the fees to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) had been paid in full.

- **Absence Statistics as at 31 August 2019:**

6.6 The absence statistics as at 31 August 2019 were reviewed.

## **7. Internal Audit Update**

7.1 Grant Thornton provided an update on the internal audit report into GDPR. The report has not yet been issued, however following a conference call to take place this week to

discuss recommendations, it is envisaged that the report will be sent by the start of November.

## **8. National Audit Office update**

- 8.1 The Committee noted that the Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019 were laid in Parliament in July 2019.
- 8.2 The National Audit Office provided an update on the plan for the next audit.

**Action: Audit Plan to be included in December committee papers.**

## **9. Corporate Risk Register 2019-20**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the Commission's risk register, which included highlighting the current status of the 'red' risks.

## **10. Expenses of Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive**

- 10.1 The Committee reviewed the expenses of the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive and approved the claims.

## **11. International Travel**

- 11.1 The Chief Executive reported on the international travel of the staff from April 2019 to September 2019. This included travel funded by ENNHRI, Fundamental Rights Agency, Turks and Caicos Islands Human Rights Commission and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

## **12. Any other Business**

- 12.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on staffing which included the recent recruitment drive for a Legal and Research Officer (full time – temporary), a Policy and Research Assistant (full time – temporary) and a Director (legal, research and investigations, and advice to government) (full time –

temporary). The Chief Executive reported on his concern over the lack of applicants as a result of the Commission not advertising at the market-rate, and provided an update on conversations with the NIO on this issue.

12.2 The Chief Executive provided an update on the potential new office space and ongoing conversations with the letting agent. The Chief Executive also provided an update on conversations with the NIO on this issue.

12.3 The Chief Executive reported on an incident of unacceptable behaviour. The incident has been dealt with following the Managing Unacceptable Behaviour from Members of the Public policy.

12.4 The date of the next meeting is 12 December 2019 at 10.00am in the Commission's offices.

The meeting closed at 11:20am