



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

**23 June 2023**

## **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  
Eddie Rooney  
Stephen White

**In Attendance:** David Russell, Chief Executive  
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)  
Colin Caughey, Director (Advice to Government, Research and Investigations) (via MS Teams)  
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer  
Thomas Lough, Northern Ireland Office (NIO)  
Paul Keane, National Audit Office (NAO) (via MS Teams)  
Mike Surman, National Audit Office  
Mark Lawther, Ernst & Young (EY)  
Judith Hobson, Ernst & Young  
Deirbhile Murtagh, Ernst & Young  
Jenny McGuckin, ASM Belfast (via MS Teams)

## **1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from:
  - David A Lavery CB
  - Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)
  - Éilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU Withdrawal)
  - Claire Martin Director (Communications & Engagement)

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

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

- 3.1 The Chairperson reported on a complaint received on appeal. The Chairperson reported no findings against the Commission.

## **4. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2023 (minutes enclosed)**

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 10 May 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **5. Matters arising from 10 May 2023**

- 5.1 Member Stephen White reported his absence from meeting on 10 May was due to a family bereavement and thanked members for their condolences.
- 5.2 Amended absence statistics for 31 March 2023 included in papers (item 7.3 from 10 May 2023 meeting).

## **6. Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 (paper enclosed)**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

6.2 The Committee noted that it was considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the 2022-23 financial statements.

6.3 The Committee approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

## **7. National Audit Office Audit Completion Report**

### **Audit Completion Report on the 2022-23 Financial Statements Audit**

7.1 Judith Hobson, EY provided an overview of the National Audit Office Audit Completion Report.

7.2 It was noted that there were no unadjusted misstatements, and no issues were identified in relation to the management override of controls, going concern status, provisions of legal cases and presumed risk of revenue recognition.

7.3 The Committee approved the report.

## **8. Oral Update from the Chief Executive (including KPI framework document)**

- ***Independent Review***

8.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on the Independent Review.

8.2 Fortnightly meetings continue to take place with representatives from the NIO following a recommendation from the Independent Review.

8.3 The Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) have met with EHRC who have supplied information on EHRC's pay policy and grading. This information will be used in due course to develop a business case on Recommendation 6 (Explore a new pay policy for the NIHRC).

8.4 The Chief Executive reported on risk management for legal cases and conversations with the NIO to understand the risks facing the

Commission and how best to reduce the risk of costs relating to legal cases.

8.5 The Chief Executive reported that the financial aspect of the Independent Review has not been addressed to date. There has not yet been a formal response from the Secretary of State and the Independent Review has not yet been published. The Commission awaits an outcome of the business case submitted to the NIO.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Framework**

8.6 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the KPI Framework and continuing progress, highlighting that 2023/24 will be a pilot year commencing in the third quarter.

8.7 The Chief Executive reported that the KPI Framework has been based on what the Commission considers a model of good practice for a National Human Rights Institution.

8.8 The Chief Executive advised that the reporting template and measurement tools for the KPI Framework will be presented at the next Committee meeting.

8.9 The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of the Commission keeping the KPI Framework reporting proportionate to the size of the organisation.

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

- **Financial Report for May 2023:**

9.1 The Director provided an overview of the financial report for May 2023 including projections to the year end.

9.2 The Director reported that the Commission was now providing the NIO with a detailed breakdown alongside the standard COINS return which includes projections to the year end and projected surplus / deficit position at year end.

9.3 The Director reported that following Recommendation Eight of the Independent Review, (Improved Financial Governance processes between the NIO and NIHRC), NIO have requested information from NIHRC with a view to NIHRC joining Account NI.

- **Staffing update**

9.4 The Director reported that a new Policy and Research Officer was appointed in March 2023 who was appointed on a full time basis however is currently working 25 hours per week. The staff member will commence full time in July.

9.5 The Director highlighted the amended absence statistics as at 31 March 2023.

9.6 The Director provided an overview of the absence statistics as at 31 May 2023.

- **High Value Purchases as at 19 June 2023:**

9.7 The Director provided an overview of high value purchases and advised committee members that the Commission has a capital budget in 23/24 for the purchase of replacement computers for staff.

## **10. Internal Audit Update including:**

### **Annual Internal Audit Assurance Report 2022-23 (paper enclosed) Draft 2023-24 Internal Audit Plan (paper enclosed)**

10.1 Jenny McGuckin provided an Internal Audit update.

10.2 The Committee noted that the annual internal audit assurance report for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 provided a satisfactory assurance and that the Commission's systems in relation to risk management, control and governance were adequate and operated effectively.

10.3 The Committee noted the changes to the proposed internal audit plan for 2023/24.

10.4 The Committee gave approval for the internal audits for year three of the three-year audit cycle.

## **11. AOB**

11.1 There being no other business the meeting closed at 15.20am.