



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

14 March 2022

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee held 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)
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal, Research and Investigations and Advice to Government)
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer
Caoimhe Ward, Ernst & Young (via MS Teams)
Emma Boyd, Ernst & Young (via MS Teams)
Brian Clerkin, ASM Belfast (via MS Teams)
Edel Corsar, Northern Ireland Office (via MS Teams)
Thomas Lough, Northern Ireland Office

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
Paul Keane, National Audit Office
Anna Wojtal, National Audit Office
Claire Martin (Director of Engagement)
Éilis Haughey (Director – Human Rights after EU Withdrawal)
Margie Murphy, Boardroom Apprentice

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

3. Chairperson's Business

- 3.1 The Chairperson reported that he will schedule for Les Philpott to attend the Committee meeting in September 2022.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 6 December 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising from 6 December 2021

- 5.1 *Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) Report (Item 6.3 of the 6 December 2021 minutes refers) - the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported that the budget for the Dedicated Mechanism was not re-profiled and will not be for the year ending 31 March 2022.*
- 5.2 *Corporate Risk Register 2021-22 (Item 9.3 of the 6 December 2021 minutes refers) – the Director (Finance, Personnel and*

Corporate Affairs) reported that tracked changes had gone to the Commission meeting in December 2021.

5.3 *Any other business (Item 11.3 of the 6 December 2021 minutes refers)* – the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported that training on Cyber Security, Risk Management, Procurement and Fraud and further GDPR training for Commissioner has been budgeted for in 2022-23.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to organise a half day training for Committee members around Cyber Security.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to arrange a meeting between the Chairperson and the Chief Executive to assess the continuous training requirements of the Committee members.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to add the note provided by the Chairperson from the Committee members only meeting of 6 December 2021 as an appendix to the minutes of 6 December 2021.

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

- **Financial Expenditure as at 31 January 2022:**

6.1 The Director provided an overview of the financial report to 31 January 2022.

6.2 The Director reported that anticipated underspend for Core is £61,000 and £107,000 for the Dedicated Mechanism. Underspend is due to vacant posts.

6.3 The Director reported that recruitment for the vacant Policy and Research Officer post and the Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer has commenced.

6.4 The Director reported that there are additional costs not yet committed that will reduce underspend at year end.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to confirm if any underspend in the Dedicated Mechanism is to be returned to the NIO.

6.5 The Director reported that travel costs over the last two financial years was greatly reduced and is expected to increase in 2022-23.

- **Cash Flow report as at 31 January 2022:**

6.6 The Director provided an overview of the cash flow report at 31 January 2022.

- **High Value Purchases as at 28 February 2022:**

6.7 The Director provided an overview of high value purchases report at 28 February 2022.

- **Absences Statistics as at 28 February 2022:**

6.8 The Director reported on the absence statistics as at 28 February 2022.

6.9 The Director reported that the Core budget was confirmed by NIO on 17 December 2021 for the next 3 year with a 5% cut in year 1 and no further cuts in years 2 and 3.

6.10 The Chief Executive reported that while there are no cuts in years 2 and 3, the Commission will face inflationary pressures.

7. Freedom of Information

7.1 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the Freedom of Information requests for the period November 2021 – February 2022.

7.2 The Chief Executive reported that should an FOI not be responded to, this would be reported to the Committee however, the only instances where this may be the case would be due to legal privilege or cost.

8. Internal Audit Update

- 8.1 Brian Clerkin (ASM Belfast) provided an overview of the Financial Systems final report.
- 8.2 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) assured Committee members that the priority 2 recommendation in relation to the contracts register will be complete within the required timeline.
- 8.3 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) reported that there is a delay in updating the Financial Procedures Manual due to the Memorandum being with the NIO for final sign off.
- 8.4 Brian Clerkin provided an overview of the Strategic and Business Planning final report.
- 8.5 Brian Clerkin provided an overview of the follow up of 2019/20 audit recommendations.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to schedule Equality as an agenda item twice a year for Committee meetings.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to liaise with IT to facilitate Committee members to complete Information Assurance training on the Civil Service Learning platform.

9. National Audit Office Update

- 9.1 Caoimhe Ward, EY, reported that interim audit testing is complete and is currently going through review. Nothing arising from interim audit testing.
- 9.2 Caoimhe Ward reported that the final year end audit is due to take place in May 2022.

10. Corporate Risk Register 2021-22

10.1 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the corporate risk register.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to amend wording 'failure to engage' on Risk001.

Action: Chief Executive and Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to provide the Quarterly Business report to future Committee meetings.

10.2 The Chief Executive advised that the budget for the Dedicated Mechanism was guaranteed for the next year (2022-23) and future budget needs to be settled as soon as possible to provide financial stability around pro rata overheads.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to step down Risk0028 'Coronavirus'.

10.3 The Chief Executive advised that terms of reference (TOR) for an independent review are with the NIO for sign off.

10.4 Thomas Lough, NIO, reported that the delay on approval of TOR by the NIO was due to a delay in Cabinet Office issuing new guidance.

11. GDPR

11.1 Committee member, Eddie Rooney, provided an oral update on the data breach and confirmed it was down to human error.

11.2 He commended the team involved, in the speed at which the data breach was dealt with.

12. Chief Executive Expenses

12.1 The Committee reviewed, noted and approved the expenses of the Chief Executive.

13. International Travel

13.1 The Committee reviewed and noted the international travel report.

14. Gifts and Hospitality Register

14.1 The Committee reviewed and noted the gifts and hospitality register.

15. AOB

15.1 There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 11:55.