



18 March 2026

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
Mairead Holder
Justin Kouame
Stephen White
Helen Henderson (Online)
David Lavery (Online)

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer
Sridevi Sakruthi, Finance Officer
Darren Veighey, Administrative Officer
Chris Telford, SCC Chartered Accountants
Aidan Dummigan, Ernst & Young (EY) (Online)
Alex Tarrant-Anderson, National Audit Office (NAO) (Online)

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chairperson welcomed Commissioners Holder and Kouame's and staff member Sridevi Sakruthi to their first Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting.
- 1.3 Apologies were received from Claire Martin Director (Engagement and Communications), Rhyannon Blythe Director (Legal Services), Éilis Haughey Director (Dedicated Mechanism) and Colin Caughey (Advice to government, research and investigations) Mark Lawther (EY) and Keith Lloyd (NAO).

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 Commissioner White informed the Committee that he had been recently reappointed as Chairperson of the RUC George Cross Foundation.

3. Chairperson's business

- 3.1 The Chairperson was pleased that the Commission was adequately covered in cyber security. He reiterated the importance of having all paperwork completed to this effect.
- 3.2 The Committee members will meet after the June meeting to discuss the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee effectiveness tool outcome.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2025 and minutes of closed meeting held on 19 February 2026

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 15 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.
Action: Approved minutes of 15 December 2025 to be uploaded to the Commission's website.
- 4.2 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee closed meeting held on 19 February 2026 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 15 December 2025

5.1 There were no matters arising.

6. Corporate Report

6.1 The Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Officer presented an overview of the following reports:

- Finance Report for February 2026 for Core and Dedicated Mechanism
- High Value Purchases 1 November 2025-28 February 2026
- Absence statistics for the period ended 28 February 2026
- Prompt Payment performance to date

6.2 It was reported that a staff engagement survey had been issued to staff which is due to be completed by the end of March and a report will be collated of the results.

Commissioner Henderson remarked that it would be helpful to obtain a full breakdown of costs in relation to contracting of human resources support.

Action: Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) and Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs officer to advise at June 2026 ARMC meeting on future reporting of human resources support contracts.

6.3 Recent staff appointments were reported as follows:

- Michael Boyd was appointed Senior Engagement and Communications Officer (Grade 7) following an external recruitment process.
- Sridevi Sakruthi joined the Commission as Finance Officer.
- Tara Grace Connolly was appointed as Senior Engagement and Communications Officer (Deputy Principal) following an internal trawl.
- Melody Kozah and Tom Lord joined the Commission as Policy and Research Officers.
- Natalia Gima was appointed as an Engagement and Communications Officer following an internal trawl.

- 6.4 SCC Chartered Accountants completed the mapping/benchmarking exercise in January 2026. The final report was presented to a special Audit and Risk Management Committee on 19 February 2026 and to the Commission Board on 23 February 2026. The report will be shared with the NIO in due course.
- 6.5 It was noted that an interim external audit had taken place in February 2026.
- 6.6 It was noted that there have been no data breaches (GDPR) since 1 April 2025.
- 6.7 It was noted that the Commission had received six Subject Access Requests since 1 April 2025. A further request is being considered and is due to be responded to by 3 April 2026.
- 6.8 It was reported that the Commission has received five complaints from individuals to date. None of the complaints were upheld.

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.

8. Freedom of Information requests

- 8.1 Details of Freedom of Information requests from November 2025-February 2026 were presented by the Director (Engagement and Communications).

9. Chief Executive Report

- 9.1 The Chief Executive reported that the 2026-27 recruitment process will be prioritised towards an extra staff member for the Engagement & Communications team given the budgetary constraints.
- 9.2 The Chief Executive delivered on the draft business plan for 2026-27. The structure of the report had been kept the same as previous years with ten priorities highlighted and details of how delivery of priorities will be evidenced.

- 9.3 It was reported that the complaint made by Mr Murray on comments made by the Chief Commissioner had not been upheld. Mr Murray had appealed the decision..

10. National Audit Office

- 10.1 The Chairperson welcomed Alex Tarrant-Anderson to his first meeting since taking over from Elaine Manak.
- 10.2 Aidan Dummigan confirmed that interim audit processes had been completed and that he had no further matters to update the Committee on.

11. Internal Audit Update

- 11.1 Chris Telford presented the Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2025-26 (Three Year Forecast). This document was formulated in line with the Corporate Risk Register.
- 11.2 Chris Telford presented the final draft Internal Audit Charter.
- 11.3 The Committee approved the Internal Audit Plan 2025-26 and the Internal Audit Charter.

12. International Travel

- 12.1 Details of international travel costs for year 2025-26 were presented by the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs). It was highlighted that, where possible, costs had been recovered from event organisers.

13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 The date of the next meeting would be circulated to members in due course.