



22 June 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)

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement & Communications) (Online)
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer
Sridevi Sakruthi, Finance Officer
Darren Veighey, Administrative Officer
Mark Lawther, Ernst & Young (EY)
Chris Telford, SCC Chartered Accountants
Christopher Dunne, Northern Ireland Office (NIO) (Online)
Alex Tarrant-Anderson, National Audit Office (NAO) (Online)
Conor White, SCC Chartered Accountants (Online)

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone in attendance.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from David Lavery (Commissioner), Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services), and Stephen Torney (NIO).

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's business

- 3.1 The Chairperson put on record his thanks to Commissioners Henderson, Lavery and White for their contribution to the Audit and Risk Management Committee while serving as Commissioners. This would be their last meeting before stepping down from their roles. The Chairperson wished them all the very best for the future.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2026

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 18 March 2026 were agreed as an accurate record.

Action: Approved minutes from 18th March 2026 to be uploaded to Commission website.

5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 18 March 2026

- 5.1 The Chairperson wished to clarify his comments from the previous meeting regarding cyber security, in that the NIHRC should obtain the same accreditation (Cyber Essentials) as their IT partners.

6. Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

- 6.1 The Chief Executive and Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Officer provided an overview of the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26.
- 6.2 The Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Officer was acknowledged for all her work in completing the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26.

7. National Audit Office Audit Completion Report 2025-26

- 7.1 Mark Lawther provided an overview of the NAO Completion Report 2025-26.
- 7.2 Mr Lawther also informed the Committee that his tenure of managing the external audit had come to an end. Mr Lawther was thanked for all his endeavours during his term.

8. Oral update from the Chief Executive

- 8.1 The Chief Executive updated the meeting in relation to the Gary Murray case.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive reported that the proposed new pay policy for staff had been signed off by the Secretary of State after receiving approval from both the Union and the NIO. The new policy would commence immediately (backdated to 1 April 2026). It was noted that there would be no impact on staff pensions and terms and conditions. Staff would each receive a letter to this effect.

9. Corporate Update

- 9.1 The Finance Report for May 2026 (for both Core and Dedicated Mechanism) was presented by the Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Officer. This paper reflected actual spend.
- 9.2 Absence statistics were provided for year 2025-26 and period ending 31 May 2026.
- 9.3 High value purchases information was provided for the year 2025-26 and period ending 31 May 2026.

9.4 The Internal Audit Recommendations Tracker (updated May 2026) was included in the papers.

9.5 The Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) updated the meeting on the recent staff survey which was completed in March 2026. A meeting would be arranged to update staff and the results would also be shared with Commissioners in due course.

The Director was very pleased with the response level from staff. Early observations indicated that the feedback was positive.

9.6 The Director also reported that Rachel Hasson had joined the Commission on 15 June 2026 as a Digital Communications Assistant.

9.7 It was noted that Subject Access Requests should be easier managed going forward. The Commission had adopted a new data retention policy which included staff emails being deleted after 6 months.

9.8 Details of recent complaints made against the Commission were also shared.

9.9 The Annual Fair Employment Monitoring return was submitted to the Equality Commission in April 2026.

9.10 Staff training details were also laid out for Commissioners.

9.11 New Commissioners would be inducted in September 2026. Commissioner White stated that it may be a useful exercise to generate feedback from the new Commissioners relating to the induction process.

10. Corporate Risk Register

10.1 The Chief Executive and Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) highlighted changes in the Corporate Risk Register since the last Committee meeting.

10.2 It was agreed that the 'Compliance with the Paris Principles' risk should be updated to include reference to accessing places of detention as recommended by the GANHRI sub committee on accreditation.

10.3 A new risk should be added addressing the role of Secretary and Chair of GANHRI.

11. Freedom of Information Requests

11.1 Details of Freedom of Information requests for March 2026 and for the period April-May 2026 were provided.

12. Internal Audit Update

12.1 Chris Telford updated the meeting with information including:

- Internal Quality Assessment 2025-26
- Follow-up of Outstanding Recommendations 2025-26
- Budget Management Final Draft Report
- Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report
- Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan 2026-2028

13. Terms of Reference

13.1 The draft Terms of Reference was discussed and it was agreed to revert back to it at the next meeting.

Action: Draft Terms of Reference to be considered at the next meeting.

14. Any other Business

14.1 The date of next meeting would be circulated in due course.