



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

05 December 2022

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee Meeting

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
David Lavery (via MS Teams)
Eddie Rooney (via MS Teams)
Stephen White

In Attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Fiona Lockwood, (Administrative Officer)
Thomas Lough, NIO
Amanda McMaw, ASM
Mark Lawther, EY
Deirbhile Murtagh, EY
Judith Hobson, EY
Paul Keane, NAO (via MS Teams)
Mike Surman, NAO (via MS Teams)

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed everyone, including new members to the meeting and introductions were made.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from:
Eilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU Withdrawal)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications & Engagement)
Colin Caughey, Director (Policy, Research, and Investigations)
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)
Brian Clerkin, ASM

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

3. Chairperson's Business

- 3.1 The Chairperson had nothing to report.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2022 (minutes enclosed)

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 13 June 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising from 13 June 2022

- 5.1 There were no matters arising.

6. Oral Update from the Chief Executive

- ***Staffing Update***

- 6.1 The Chief Executive provided a staffing update.
- 6.2 Recruitment is currently underway for a Policy and Research Officer for the Dedicated Mechanism.
- 6.3 The Commission failed to recruit to the post of Senior Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs Officer. The job specification is being looked at again with plans to advertise the post as a

Staff Officer grade on a one-year fixed term contract.

- **Review**

- 6.5 A final draft of the independent review is due to be completed by 9 December 2022 and should be received before the end of December. The proposed timing will be confirmed.
- 6.6 It was agreed that the draft should first be presented to the Commission Board for discussion at their meeting on 19 December 2022 (if possible). Any issues identified as pertinent for the Audit Committee will be raised with the Audit Chairperson.
- 6.7 A meeting was held with the Global Alliance Committee Accreditation (SCA) who would like to see a full draft of the review by 15 December 2022. This has been raised with reviewers, is progressing, and is expected to complete on time.

7. Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) Report

- **Finance Report as at 31 October 2022**

- 7.1 The Committee noted that the staff pay-award, back dated to 1 August 2022, is yet to be finalised. The Director (Finance) confirmed that the pay award has been based on the Ministerial Statement issued by the Finance Minister in October 2022. This stated that the Finance Minister would be recommending a pay deal for NICS staff that offered a 2.5% progression plus £1,400 for AO to Grade 6 staff and a 2.5% progression plus £1,000 for Senior Civil Service Grades.
- 7.2 Inflationary rises have also been taken into consideration for Building Maintenance and Office Expenses, which includes increased costs for cleaning and general maintenance and Heat and Light.
- 7.3 It was noted that the NAO have confirmed a 25% increase on the 2021/22 audit fee. The fee for 2022/23 will be £21,875.

- **High Value Purchases**

7.4 The Director provided an overview of high value purchases report at 31 October 2022.

- **Absence Statistics**

7.5 The Committee reviewed the absence statistics.

- **GDPR**

7.6 It was noted that there were no breaches of GDPR.

- **Managing Difficult Members of the Public**

7.7 It was noted that there have been two incidents of unacceptable behaviour by members of the public since 1 April 2022.

8. Internal Audit Update including Review of IT Systems and Security (incl. Business Continuity Planning & GDPR Compliance).

8.1 ASM updated on the internal audit findings on IT systems, including Business Continuity Planning and GDPR compliance.

8.2 Areas for improvement were recommended and accepted. This included annual GDPR training which will be attended by the nominated data protection officer and data protection practitioner.

8.3 There were no priority one findings and one priority two finding in relation to the business continuity plan (BCP). This will be reviewed in due course with the Senior Management Team. It was agreed that David Russell, Claire Martin, and Lorraine Hamill will be the named staffing members on the BCP. This decision was made after careful consideration of the management posts that interact most closely with the identified risks.

- 8.4 It was noted that the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) is responsible for IT policy and procedures, through the Service Level Agreement. If there are updates made by ECNI, these will be reflected in the NIHRC's policies.

9. National Audit Office Update

Audit Planning Report on the 2022-23 Financial Statements Audit

- 9.1 EY provided an update on the audit plan for the Financial Statements audit for 2022-23.
- 9.2 The Committee noted and accepted the changes in the risk assessment procedures in line with the revised ISA 315.
- 9.3 The Committee considered and accepted the NAO's fraud risk assessment.

10. Freedom of Information Requests

- 10.1 The Committee noted the recent Freedom of Information Requests which had been responded to within the required timescales.

11. Risk Register

- 11.1 An overview of the risk register and subsequent actions taken was given.

12. Quarterly Report against the Business Plan (paper enclosed)

- 12.1 Ongoing, completed and activities that would not complete were discussed and noted.
- 12.2 Key issues affecting the activities that would not complete were a lack of staffing capacity, parental leave, vacant posts, and budget constraints.
- 12.3 An overview of the strategic objectives and their progress

ratings were reviewed by the Chief Executive.

13. Expenses of the Chief Executive

13.1 The Chief Executive's expenses sheet was approved by the Committee.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 There was no other business.

Meeting ended at 11:30am.