



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

## **AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE 6<sup>th</sup> MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 27 APRIL 2007 AT 10.30AM AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

**Present:** Bill Smith, Chairperson  
Alan Henry  
Kevin McLaughlin (by telephone)  
Eamonn O'Neill  
Geraldine Rice

**In attendance:** Paddy Sloan, Chief Executive  
Don Leeson, Head of Corporate Services  
Lorraine Hamill, Administrative Officer (Finance)

**Apologies:** Christine Eames

The Chief Executive was congratulated on her new appointment as National Head of BBC Children in Need Northern Ireland, with effect from 1 June 2007.

#### **1. Minutes of the last meeting (6 February 2007)**

- 1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### **2. Matters arising**

- 2.1 The NIO approved the creation of the three new posts and shortlisting has now taken place. Interview dates have been arranged. There is no independent observer on the interview panels as they are balanced. It was recommended that an independent observer be used for the post of the Chief Executive, and indeed for any posts in the top two tiers of the organisation (paragraph 2.3 refers).

- 2.2 The Commission has not yet received comments from NIPSA on the revised travel and expenses policy as their official is on extended sick leave (paragraph 2.5 refers).
- 2.3 The Chief Executive is to arrange an appraisal date for the Chairperson (paragraph 2.6 refers). One Commissioner's appraisal is also outstanding and she will also make arrangements for this to take place as soon as possible.  
**Action: Chief Executive**
- 2.5 The briefing event on the updated Financial Procedures Manual and new personnel policies will not now take place in April 2007 because of other priorities. This has been postponed until September/October 2007 when all the new posts have been filled (paragraph 2.8 refers).  
**Action: Head of Corporate Services**

*Eamonn O'Neill joined the meeting.*

- 2.6 The revised pay policy has been approved by the NIO (paragraph 4.1 refers).
- 2.7 The Commission decided that the Moderating Panel to oversee the operation of the non-consolidated performance bonus scheme should not only be made up of members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, but should consist of other Commissioners. The Audit and Risk Management Committee recommended that the Chairperson should be a member of the panel. This will be put to the next meeting of the Commission on 14 May 2007 (paragraph 4.2 refers).  
**Action: Head of Corporate Services**

### **3. Annual Internal Audit Assurance Report**

- 3.1 The Internal Audit Assurance Report was noted and approved.
- 3.2 It was noted that the Commission had received a 'reasonable' audit rating, which means that it has sound controls mechanisms in place. It was also noted that very few organisations receive the highest ('substantial') assurance rating.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive thanked the Head of Corporate Services and the Administrative Officer (Finance) for all their work in reducing the number of recommendations required.

- 3.4 The audit plan for the internal audit in October will be discussed at the next meeting on 4 June 2007.

#### **4. Corporate Risk Management**

- 4.1 The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed in detail and approved for submission to the Commission on 14 May 2007.

**Action: Head of Corporate Services**

- 4.2 Discussions took place regarding the interim management arrangements that would need to be put in place after the Chief Executive leaves.

- 4.3 It was agreed that the Head of Corporate Services should take on the role of Interim Accounting Officer, as recommended by the NIO, pending the appointment of the New Chief Executive. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and Committee members would provide advice to the Accounting Officer if any difficulties arose.

- 4.4 The Audit and Risk Management Committee was content for the Head of Information, Education and Development and the Head of Legal Services, Policy and Research to be signatories for the payroll and other payments, along with the Head of Corporate Services. On appointment of a Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, s/he will be included with the managers in approving the payroll and other payments.

**Action: Administrative Officer (Finance)**

- 4.5 Concerns were also raised regarding the need for two new members to be appointed to the Audit and Risk Management Committee, as two of the members' terms of office are due to end. The Chief Executive agreed to raise this at the next Commission meeting.

**Action: Chief Executive**

#### **5. Development plan for the Audit and Risk Management Committee for 2007-08**

- 5.1 The development plan for 2007-08 was discussed in detail and approved. It was agreed that it focused on the key areas.

#### **6. Expenses of the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive**

- 6.1 The expenses of the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive were reviewed and noted.

- 6.2 It was recommended that the policy regarding who represents the Commission at international events should be reviewed and that all international visits by Commissioners and staff are noted by the Audit and Risk Management Committee, retrospectively if necessary.

**Action: Head of Corporate Services**

## **7. Date of next meetings**

- 7.1 The next Committee meeting will be held on Monday 4 June 2007 at 10.30 am. Agenda items for the meeting will be the annual report and accounts for 2006-07 and the audit plan.