



**AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 10.00AM
ON THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2017
IN THE OFFICES OF THE
NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Joe McKnight, Chairperson
Eddie Rooney
Graham Shields

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Colin Caughey, Director (Legal, Research and
Investigations, and Advice to Government)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel &
Corporate Affairs)
Claire Martin, Director (Communications, Information
and Education, Public and Political Affairs)
Rebecca Magee, Personal Assistant
Paul Oliffe, Director, NAO (conference call)
Andrew Scholes, Policy Advisor, NIO

1.0 Welcome and apologies

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to their first meeting as members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Apologies: Helen Ferguson
Leanda Thompson, NIO
Richard Steven, NIO
Bilal Zahid, NIO

2.0 Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

3.0 Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson provided an update on the recent meeting with Dawn Johnson, Chair of the NIO Audit Committee.

4.0 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017

The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 5 July 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

5.0 Matters arising from 5 July 2017 minutes

Financial Procedures Manual – further updates are to be made to the manual as the Commission plans to move to new banking facilities. The manual would be available for sign off by the Committee at their meeting in December 2017 (Paragraph 5.1 of the minutes of the 5 July 2017 meeting refers).

Action: Revised Financial Procedures Manual to be brought to the December 2017 Committee meeting.

6.0 Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs) Report

6.1 Financial Expenditure as at 30 September 2017

6.1.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) provided a detailed overview of the financial report, including opening and closing accruals and prepayments, commitments to the end of the financial year and provided information on any variances in expenditure.

6.1.2 She also advised the Committee that the budget was being reviewed as part of the November monitoring round, which was due to be submitted to the NIO the following week.

6.1.3 It was noted that there was an underspend in research due to a piece of work being conducted in-house rather than outsourced. The underspend will be used for a new piece of research within the current financial year.

6.2 High Value Purchases as at 30 September 2017

6.2.1 The Committee noted the High Value Purchases to 30 September 2017.

6.2.2 The Committee noted that the prompt payments to date for 2017/18 were within the Government target.

6.3 Absence Statistics as at 30 September 2017

6.3.1 The absence statistics as at 30 September 2017 were reviewed and it was noted that sick absence was lower than for the same period last year.

6.4 The Committee noted that recruitment for the post of a Communications and Public Affairs Assistant was complete but that the Commission had failed to appoint to the post of Communications and Public Affairs Officer.

7.0 Internal Audit Update – Chief Executive

The Chief Executive updated the Committee on progress following the announcement by Capita that they were withdrawing internal audit provision in Ireland.

Discussions were taking place with Capita and a novation agreement was being drawn up for Grant Thornton to take over the contract on the same terms and conditions.

7.1 Internal Audit Reports

7.1.1 Review of Governance Structures

The Committee noted that management had accepted all the recommendations on the internal audit report and that the changes had been incorporated into the Code of Governance in August 2017.

It was noted that due to time constraints on the part of Capita that a number of key people had not been contacted as part of the internal audit review on governance structures. It was agreed that when the Code of Governance was next due for review that key people should be contacted as early as possible to ensure their input.

Action: Key people to be involved as part of the next review of the Code of Governance

7.1.2 Follow up Report of 2015/2016 Recommendations

The Committee noted that out of the 11 recommendations made in the 2015/16 internal audit report, five had been fully implemented, four partially implemented and two had been superseded.

IT, Information Security and BCP

It was noted that the Commission's asset register was being updated to include the recent disposals and that all equipment was in the process of being newly asset tagged.

Communications

It was agreed to consider whether the compilation of a daily digest was an efficient use of resources and if it was, contingency arrangements would be put in place to ensure its implementation.

Action: Consideration of daily digest

Legal Services

The Committee noted that the process for consideration of legal applications for assistance was being reviewed and a paper would be presented to the Commission.

Action: Process for consideration of legal applications for assistance to be presented to Commission

It was noted that a business case for a new legal database was being made to the NIO for consideration.

8. National Audit Office update

8.1 The NAO Director confirmed that there had been a change in personnel but it was hoped that there would be some continuity of staff undertaking the external audit.

8.2 Meetings were being arranged with the Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) to begin the planning process for the external audit and an audit plan would be available for the next meeting.

Action: Audit Plan to be presented at the December 2017 meeting

9.0 Corporate Risk Register 2017-18

9.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) and the Chief Executive explained the program that the Commission used to report risks.

9.2 The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the Commission's risk register.

9.3 It was agreed that the Chief Executive and Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) would investigate the system to ascertain whether it could generate reports that would provide more detail on the risks.

Action: More detailed risk register to be made available

9.4 Commissioner Rooney requested that he was concerned with the level of reporting required for such a small organisation. It was agreed that an additional risk should be added to 'failure to meeting accounting performance reports' under governance and that progress would be discussed and monitored by the Committee.

Action: Additional risk to be added under 'failure to meet accounting performance reports'

10.0 Expenses of the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive

10.1 The Committee reviewed the expenses of the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive and approved the claims.

11.0 International Events to 30 September 2017

11.1 The Committee reviewed the international events attended by Commissioners and staff for the period to the 30 September 2017.

12.0 Gifts and Hospitality Register to 30 September 2017

12.1 The Committee reviewed the gifts and hospitality register (provided and received) to 30 September 2017.

12.2 It was agreed that roles and organisation details for recipients should be included on the register and that the travel costs for Rosslyn Noonan should include that it was from New Zealand.

Action: More detail to be included in the gifts and hospitality register

13.0 Any Other Business

13.1 It was agreed that the review of the Code of Governance would take place following the review of the NIO Framework document.

Action: Code of Governance to be reviewed following review of Framework document.

13.2 The Committee approved the 'Forward Look' plan for 2018/19 agenda items.

14.0 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 6 December 2017 at 10am.

The meeting closed at 11:30 am.