



AUDIT RISK & ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)
Minutes of Meeting
Tuesday 30 May 2023 10.00am
Equality House

Present:

Terry McGonigal **TMG** (ARAC Chair)
Laura O'Neill **LON** (ARAC Member)
Conor Minnis **CM** (ARAC Member)

Staff

Andrew Sloan **AS** (Chief Executive, Commission for Victims and Survivors)
Stephen Moore **SM** (Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Commission for Victims and Survivors)
Marie Neill **MN** (Secretariat, Commission for Victims and Survivors)

In Attendance:

Catriona McHugh **CMH** (Cavanagh Kelly – Internal Auditors)
Andrew Allen **AA** (Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) – External Auditors)
Julie Shirlow **JS** (The Executive Office)
Martin Larkin **ML** (The Executive Office)

Apologies:

None

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Roundtable introductions were made as this was the first meeting of the new ARAC.

2. Declaration of Interests

- 2.1. There were no Conflicts of Interests noted.

3. Minutes of meeting on 29 March 2023

- 3.1. **TMG** noted that the minutes from the meeting on 29 March 2023 had been agreed by the outgoing chair. One minor typo was accepted and will be amended.
- 3.2. Completed actions were noted. Outstanding actions were discussed.

4. Internal Audit Update

- 4.1. **CMH** presented the draft Internal Audit Strategy 2023/26 and Annual Internal Audit Plan 2023/24.
- 4.2. It was noted that the areas suggested for review were Research and Policy Programme/Project management, Management of the Forum and GDPR, Complaints and Freedom of Information/Subject Access Requests.
- 4.3. **TMG** questioned the number of days allocated to each review, given the size of the commission. **CMH** gave assurance that the days were adequate to enable them to agree Terms of Reference, carry out fieldwork and provide reports. It was also noted that the plan was a guide and there was a degree of flexibility to allow for any changes should the need arise.

5. NIAO Update

- 5.1. **AA** presented the Audit Strategy for 2022-23, which set out the audit approach, timetable and fees.
- 5.2. It was noted that the fee would be £16,000 which was an increase of 13% on the previous year. He stated this was due to the introduction of IAS 315 and the adoption of a Risked Based Planning approach to Audits, and the impact of salary inflation.
- 5.3. **CM** queried if the increase was for one year only and **AA** advised that it would be reviewed annually.
- 5.4. **TMG** referred to Sc 4 of the Audit Strategy and asked of the Timetable outlined in this section was achievable. **AA** stated that he was content that the resources were in place to deliver against the agreed timelines.. **SM** confirmed that the production of the annual report and accounts was on track in accordance with the timetable agreed with NIAO.
- 5.5. **TMG** also referred to Sc 1 in the Audit Strategy, relating to the 'Actions for the ARAC'. He asked if the Committee were content that all risks had been

appropriately identified and managed, and if they were aware of any fraud, non-compliance issues, or any other irregularities which could impact on the Annual Report and Accounts. No issues were identified by the Committee.

6. Accounting Officer Update

- 6.1. **AS** presented the Accounting Officer Update.

Performance Management

- 6.2. The Corporate Performance and Corporate Assurance Reports for quarter 4 were noted.

Risk Management

- 6.3. The Corporate Risk Register containing two amber risks and one red risk was noted.
- 6.4. **TMG** requested that the Corporate Risk Register be listed on the agenda as a separate item going forward.
- 6.5. **CM** queried if GDPR should be highlighted as a separate risk. **AS** advised that this area would be included as part of the upcoming internal audit review. The commission also have a File Retention and Disposal Schedule which has been signed off by PRONI.
- 6.6. **LON** asked for further detail on the Team Risk Registers. **AS** advised that these were presented at each SMT meeting and fed into the overall Corporate Risk Register. It was agreed that copies of the latest Team Risk Registers would be forwarded to ARAC for information.

Management Accounts and Report

- 6.7. **AS** presented a summary of the management accounts for the period April 2022 to March 2023.
- 6.8. The indicative budget allocation letter for 2023-24 was noted. **AS** advised that a draft budget had been prepared on this basis but highlighted that there was a limited allocation for programme costs. It was also noted that an estimated budget of £1.1m each year would be required, to implement the staffing level outlined in the BCS Organisational Review..
- 6.9. **TMG** queried if there would be any monitoring rounds and **JS** advised it was unlikely due to absence of ministers but would follow up.
- 6.10. **AS** highlighted that TEO were unable to process the April drawdown for grant in aid due to a delay in confirming budget allocations. The late payment resulted in the commission having insufficient funds to process payments due to HMRC and a late payment fee was charged.

Update on Business Cases and Procurement

- 6.11. The update paper on Business Cases, Procurement and Post Project Evaluations was noted.

- 6.12. **LON** queried the costs on the business case for Forum Replenishment. **AS** advised that the approach had changed and would be scaled back.
- 6.13. **JS** advised that an Addendum may be required for any potential underspend and **AS** confirmed that this would be taken into consideration.

Audit

- 6.14. The paper on the implementation of audit recommendations was reviewed, noting one outstanding recommendation on the completion of the PPE for Peace IV. **AS** advised that this was currently being prepared.

Policy Development, Research and Engagement Update

- 6.15. The paper on the Policy Development, Research and Engagement was noted.

Other Matters to Note

Organisational Structure

- 6.16. **AS** advised that the draft final report from BCS had been received and under consideration by CVS. A copy would be issued to ARAC for information.

Freedom of Information

- 6.17. No FOI request had been received since the last meeting.

Complaints

- 6.18. No complaints had been received since the last meeting.

Subject Access Requests

- 6.19. One Subject Access Requests had been received since the last meeting.

Gifts & Hospitality

- 6.20. **AS** advised that no exceptional gifts or hospitality had been received or provided since the last meeting.
- 6.21. **TMG** requested that the Gifts and Hospitality Register for the last quarter of 2022/23 be brought to the next ARAC meeting and thereafter an annual register at the start of each financial year.

Fraud

- 6.22. No instances of fraud had been reported since the last meeting.
- 6.23. **TMG** requested that Fraud and Whistleblowing be tabled as a separate agenda item going forward.

Data Breaches

- 6.24. No data breaches had been reported since the last meeting.

Guidance Received

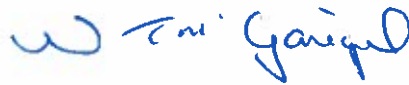
The following guidance had been received since the last meeting and was noted:

- DAO (DoF) 02/23 (15 May 2023) – Annual Theft and Fraud Report 2020-21
- DAO (DoF) 02/23 att (15 May 2023) - Annual Theft and Fraud Report 2020-21
- DAO (DoF) 01/23 (19 Jan 2023) – Accounts Directions for 2022-23
- Partnerships between Departments and Arm's Length Bodies; NI Code of Good Practice

7. AOB

- 7.1. It was noted that the ARAC members had been asked to complete and return a Skills Audit to identify any potential training requirements. All three members would be attending the Public Accountability and Governance training run by Chief Executives Forum on 12 June 2023.
- 7.2. It was agreed that a copy of the Commission's Travel and Subsistence policy along with expense claim forms would be issued to ARAC.
- 7.3. It was noted that the date for next ARAC meeting would take place on 10 August 2023.

Signed:



Name:

Terry McGonigal

Date:

17 Aug 2023

