



AUDIT RISK & ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
Thursday 7 May 2026 10.00am
Equality House, Belfast

Present:

Terry McGonigal (Chair)
Laura O'Neill (Member)
Conor Minnis (Member)

In Attendance:

Joe McVey (Commissioner)
Andrew Sloan (Commission Chief Executive)
Stephen Moore (Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs)
Ashleigh Robinson (Temporary Secretariat)
Ryan Falls (Cooper Parry Internal Auditor) - Video Conference
Elicia Erasmus (Cooper Parry Internal Auditor) - Video Conference
Andrew Allen (Northern Ireland Audit Office Audit Manager)
Roisin Lavery (The Executive Office)
Colin Childs (The Executive Office)

1.0 Introduction and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies: Marie Neill (annual leave) and Gary Rafferty (personal reasons).

2.0 Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 There were no conflicts of interests declared.

3.0 Extension of Term – ARAC Chair and Members

- 3.1 The term of the ARAC Chair and Members has been extended by three years. The Chair highlighted issues over the transition of membership at the conclusion of this term and proposed a staggered approach to

onboarding new members. The Chief Executive confirmed this was already raised with the Commissioner.

- 3.2 On a related issue, the Chair referred to DoF Circular FD (DoF) 05/25 on Remuneration of Chairpersons and Members. This circular noted that further updates would no longer be provided and that Remuneration should be consolidated into the NICS pay remit process.
- 3.3 Following discussion, the Chair suggested that a 'Member Remuneration Policy' be drawn up by the Commission. NIAO noted that this was the approach adopted by other public bodies and was considered good practice.

ACTION: CVS to draft a 'Member Remuneration Policy'

4.0 Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference were noted. It was agreed that these should be formally reviewed at the start of each financial year.

5.0 Minutes of Meeting on 5 February 2026 and Action Points

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting on held on 5 February 2026 were agreed.
- 5.2 It was noted that actions 4 and 5 were ongoing.

6.0 Cyber Security: Cyber Security (NI) Ltd IT reports March 2026

- 6.1 In the absence of Gary Rafferty, Cyber Security (NI) Ltd's Director, an overview was given by the Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs. It was noted that there were no issues and the Commission are receiving good performance and assurances from Cyber Security (NI) Ltd. They are up to date with all patches, updates, and training. ECNI are regularly assessing the effectiveness of Cyber Security NI Ltd which provides assurances.
- 6.2 ARAC members asked if it was possible for Gary Rafferty to present at the next meeting and provide a summarised report that focused on Governance, Compliance and Performance. ARAC member have questions where answers would provide clarity on targets, outcomes, and rationale for keys used.

ACTION: Gary Rafferty (Cyber Security NI Ltd) to attend next ARAC meeting.

7.0 Policy Development, Research and Engagement Update

- 7.1** The update on the activity of Policy Development, Research and Engagement was presented by the Commissioner. Business included discussion of the Troubles Bill, which was successfully carried over via a Carry-Over Motion for early next parliamentary session. The Commissioner wrote to 648 MPs to encourage them to vote in favour of the motion.
- 7.2** The Commissioner also discussed the Victims and Survivors Service funding round and the announcement of the Victims Support Programme. Many groups are unhappy with the funding, and the Commissioner and Chief Executive met with the deputy First Minister and the Sinn Féin Junior Minister as well as being invited to give evidence to the Committee for The Executive Office on 13 May 2026.
- 7.3** ARAC Members expressed disappointment that the comparison survey following the ROI Population Survey (which is now live) has to be delayed due to resourcing issues. However, they were assured that this will be done when budget allows.
- 7.4** ARAC Members were informed that PEACEPLUS Research Programme is now progressing at pace. On 6 May 2026, the Commission hosted a research information event that acted as a warm-up exercise for academics ahead of the tender process. The tender is expected to go live in a couple weeks. It will be two projects under one tender and one contract.
- 7.5** ARAC Members commended the Head of Communications and Public Relations on their recent work of effectively raising awareness of the Commission's work on social media channels.
- 7.6** The Commissioner offered to give another update on the work of the Commission at the next ARAC meeting.

8.0 Northern Ireland Audit Office Update

- 8.1** The Northern Ireland Audit Office Audit Manager explained that there are no significant risks to the Commission.
- 8.2** The Northern Ireland Audit Office Audit Manager noted that the Northern Ireland Audit Office were due to issue later this year, a Good Practice Guide on Cyber Security for Departments/ALBs.

9.0 Internal Audit Update

- 9.1** The Internal Auditor presented the Prior Year Recommendations report with an overall satisfactory assurance. All recommendations from the report were implemented.

- 9.2 It was noted that the Commission's Conflict of Interest policy was approved by the Commission Senior Management Team, but ARAC Members asked that this would be brought to them for information.

ACTION: Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs to bring the Commission's Conflict of Interest policy at next ARAC meeting for approval.

- 9.3 The Internal Auditor presented the Human Resource and Performance Management Report with an overall satisfactory assurance. There was one recommendation, that procurement training be provided to staff.
- 9.4 The Internal Auditor presented the Audit Recommendations. There was one recommendation which was to provide Procurement Training to the Commission staff.
- 9.5 ARAC Members asked Risk 3 to be reworded; there are no issues with the process of filling a vacancy and the Commission is doing all it can to manage the risk but need to highlight the ongoing pressures instead.

ACTION: Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs to reword Risk 3 in Human Resources and Performance Management Report.

- 9.6 The Internal Auditor presented the Annual Assurance Report with an overall satisfactory assurance. This was noted by ARAC Members.
- 9.7 The Internal Auditor presented the Internal Audit Plan 2026-29. It was agreed that this would be discussed further at the next ARAC Meeting.

ACTION: Discuss Internal Audit Plan 2026-29 at next ARAC Meeting.

10.0 Corporate Risk Register & Action Plan

- 10.1 The Commission Chief Executive presented the Corporate Risk Register and Action Plan. There are no changes from the last ARAC Meeting. It was noted that there remained one amber and two red risks. These had been reviewed and agreed at recent SMT and Board meetings.
- 10.2 ARAC Chair asked if it would be possible to separate 'Action Taken' and 'Control Framework' into two separate columns. The Chief Executive agreed and would reformat the Risk Register.

ACTION: Finance and Corporate Affairs Manager to reformat Corporate Risk Register.

- 10.3 ARAC Members approved the Corporate Risk Register.

11.0 Corporate Assurance Report to 31 March 2026

- 11.1 The Corporate Assurance Report for quarter 4 was noted.

12.0 Corporate Performance Report to 31 March 2026

- 12.1** The Corporate Performance Report for quarter 4 was noted.
- 12.2** ARAC Members asked Sponsor Branch Officials if they were still considering merging the Corporate Assurance Report and the Corporate Performance Report. Sponsor Branch noted that this was previously proposed, but nothing had been confirmed at this stage.
- 12.3** The ARAC Members noted one inconsistency in the Corporate Performance Report (1.6) compared to the Outcome Delivery Plan. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would amend.

ACTION: The Chief Executive to amend the inconsistency at 1.6 in the report.

The discrepancy discussed at 12.3 was noted and will be reviewed /amended, as appropriate.

13.0 Outcome Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Progress Report to 31 March 2026)

- 13.1** The Commission Chief Executive provided a verbal update of the Outcome Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Progress Report to 31 March 2026) and reported that all objectives were currently on target to be achieved. This was tempered with the need to highlight what the Commission cannot do due to lack of resources.

14.0 Management Accounts and Report to 31 March 2026

- 14.1** The Commission Chief Executive presented the management accounts to 31 March 2026. There is a small surplus of £2,000, which is within the 1.5% tolerance.
- 14.2** It was noted that the Indicative Opening Budget Allocation Letter was received. The Commission can currently only spend 45% of the indicative budget, but this will present no issues unless the final budget is significantly delayed.

15.0 Business Case and Procurement Update

- 15.1** The update paper on Business Cases, Procurement and Post Project Evaluations was reviewed and noted.
- 15.2** It was noted that the Commission's PEACEPLUS project procurement and will commence in the next 2-3 weeks.

16.0 Freedom of Information Requests

16.1 No Freedom of Information Requests had been received since the last meeting.

17.0 Subject Access Requests

17.1 No Subject Access Requests had been received since the last meeting.

18.0 Complaints

18.1 No Complaints had been received since the last meeting.

19.0 Data Breaches

19.1 No Data Breaches had been reported since the last meeting.

20.0 Gifts and Hospitality

20.2 ARAC members requested that the Gifts and Hospitality Register was reformatted into one spreadsheet prior to publication on the commission's website.

ACTION: Finance and Corporate Affairs Manager to update Gifts and Hospitality Register prior to publication on the Commission's website.

21.0 Fraud and Whistleblowing

21.1 No instances of Fraud or suspected Fraud had been reported since the last meeting.

22.0 Guidance Received

22.1 The schedule for guidance issued by Department of Finance since the last meeting was noted. Audit Committee members asked for a summary to be included of the 'implications' of the guidance on the Commission.

23.0 Effectiveness of Meeting

23.1 All in attendance were content with the effectiveness of the meeting and had no further comments. The ARAC Chair welcomed the input of the Commissioner.

24.0 Any Other Business

24.1 The Commissioner thanks the ARAC Chair and Members for extending their term and for the work and effort they put into their roles.

25.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 25.1** The next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting will take place on 6 August 2026 when the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26 will be considered prior to their submission to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for audit.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Terry McGonigal', written in a cursive style.

Name:

Terry McGonigal (Chair)

Date:

A handwritten date in blue ink, '6/8/2026', written in a cursive style.