

**Minutes of Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Meeting No. 46
Held on Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 2.30pm via Video Conference**

Present:

Séamus Magee, Commissioner (Chair)
Gerard McCurdy, Deputy Commissioner
Carmel Mullan, Commissioner
Caron Alexander, Independent Member

In Attendance:

Frances McCandless, Chief Executive
Aubrey McCrory, Head of Corporate Services
Catherine O'Hagan, NI Audit Office
Tracey McCavigan, DfC Internal Audit
Peter Murchan, DfC Internal Audit
Clare McElherron, Finance & Admin Officer (Minutes)

Apologies:

None noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am

1. Minutes of Meeting No 45

The minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance (A&RA) Committee meeting number 45 held on 15th September 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Carmel Mullan.

AP1: Minutes of meeting No 45 to be recommended to Board for approval.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The CEx indicated a potential conflict of interest in relation to any discussion of the Baume report.

3. Chair's Comments

The chair highlighted NIAO's 2021/22 audit plan would be brought to the next committee meeting along with an update on cyber security.

Details of progress in recruiting a new Finance & Admin Manager who would commence at the start of December were noted.

4. Corporate Risk Register

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the draft register and outlined the basis for suggested changes in two risk ratings. Committee members recognised in particular the risks relating to staff from ongoing remote working, temporary engagements and pressures generated by recent media and outreach activities. Following discussion it was agreed to recommend the proposed changes to the risk register to the Board as proposed by Caron Alexander and seconded by Carmel Mullan.

AP2: Risk register to be recommended to Board for approval.

5. Assurance Mapping and assurance check framework

The Head of Corporate Services outlined proposed new additional aspects to assurance processes to support the Accounting Officer and Board in meeting their corporate governance obligations. A number of queries regarding practical application and opportunities to identify learning were addressed. Following discussion it was agreed to recommend to the Board updated sources of assurance and changes in the frequency and detail of management assurance checks as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Caron Alexander.

AP3: HoCS to recommended to the Board updated sources of assurance and changes in the frequency and detail of management assurance checks

6. Progress update on internal audit assignment

Tracey McCavigan and Peter Murchan from DfC Internal Audit gave an update on the first assignment noting an overall satisfactory assurance. Areas covered included Implementation of Changes to the Interpretation of Legislation, Application of Sanctions, Human Resources (Appointment and Recruitment) and Business Continuity Plan (BCP) & Recovery Arrangements. It was noted Internal Audit had assessed operation of the BCP in response to the pandemic. The action log, recovery arrangements and lessons learnt were commended. Overall Internal Audit were satisfied there were good controls in place across all the areas reviewed and management had accepted one minor priority three recommendation. The Committee noted the final

report would come to the next meeting and work on the second assignment would take place in February 2021.

7. Committee Self-Assessment Report

Report noted.

8. National Audit Office Guidance for A&RACs during Covid 19

The Chair introduced the guidance which was welcomed. Agreed to circulate to Board members as of relevance to all Commissioners.

AP4: National Audit Office Guidance for A&RACs during Covid 19 to be circulated to all Commissioners for information.

9. Review Conditions attached to business case approvals

Report was discussed. Noted a range of business cases would be cleared down by end of March.

10. Audit Recommendations implementation report

Report noted.

11. DAO and FD letters summary

Update noted.

12. Budget

The committee discussed year to date spend and plans to engage independent counsel to assist the Commission provide assurances to sponsor department regarding legacy complaints about two statutory enquiries.

13. Fraud and Whistleblowing report

There were no issues were to report.

14. AOB

Catherine O'Hagan, NIAO, advised the committee various correspondence had been received by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and subsequently the NIAO had met with an individual regarding

complaints. She noted a report would be prepared by the Comptroller & Auditor General for the PAC, but at this time no opinion or conclusions had been drawn.

15 Issues for next meeting, Tuesday 2 March 2021 @ 10am

Items noted included NIAO 2021/22 audit plan, IA 2021/22 annual plan, IA 1st assignment report, Cyber security update, risk appetite for 2021/22 business plan, Review of A&RA committee's Terms of Reference, NIAO update 9 month accounts

Meeting Ended 3.45pm.

Audit & Risk Committee

Register of Outstanding Action Points

Committee Meeting and Action Point Number	Date Raised	Agenda Item	Action	Owners	Status
46(1)	29/11/20	1	Minutes of meeting No 45 to be recommended to Board for approval.	HoCS	Complete
46(2)	29/11/20	2	Risk register to be recommended to Board for approval.	HocS	Complete
46(3)	29/11/20	5	Update sources of assurance and change in the frequency and detail of management assurance checks to be recommended to Board	HoCS	Complete
46(4)	29/11/20	8	National Audit Office Guidance for A&RACs during Covid 19 to be circulated to all Commissioners for information.	CEx	Complete
45(4)	15/09/20	5	CEx to engage with CCEW on strategic opportunities from shared ICT services as part of the wider regulatory agenda.	CEx	Underway