

COMMISSIONER FOR OLDER PEOPLE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (COPNI)

AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY 27 JUNE 2016 AT 9.30AM IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS Gerard Campbell (Chair)  
Julie Erskine  
Don Mackay  
Breidge Gadd

IN ATTENDANCE Eddie Lynch (Commissioner, COPNI)  
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)  
Christine Burns (Northern Ireland Audit Office)  
Brian Clerkin (ASM – Internal Audit)  
Noel Griffin (Department for Communities)  
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)  
Hannah Watters (Administrative Officer, COPNI)

<b>Agenda Item 1: Apologies</b>  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  N Griffin gave apologies on behalf of Janet Smyth (DfC).  The Chair took this opportunity to welcome Eddie Lynch to his post as Commissioner.	<b>NOTED</b>
<b>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</b>  a) <b><u>Conflict of Interests</u></b> No conflicts of interests were declared.  b) <b><u>Fraud</u></b> No incidents of fraud were reported in this period.  c) <b><u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u></b> An updated version of the register was tabled. E Hoy informed members about the entry and the Chair approved the register.	<b>NOTED</b>  <b>NOTED</b>  <b>ARAC 06/16/1a</b> <b>NOTED</b>
d) <b><u>Register of International Conferences &amp; Events</u></b> No entries for this period.	<b>ARAC 06/16/1b</b> <b>NOTED</b>

<p>e) <b><u>Direct Award Contracts</u></b>  The record of direct award contracts during the period was noted and E Hoy explained the item.</p>	<p>ARAC 06/16/1c  <b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>f) <b><u>Whistleblowing</u></b>  Nothing to report for this period.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of the Meeting of 7 March 2016</b></p> <p>The minutes of the last ARAC meeting were approved by Members subject to some minor amendments on pages 5 and 7.</p> <p>The minutes were then signed by the Chair and a copy will be published on the COPNI website.</p> <p><b><u>Actions arising from ARAC Meeting 7 March 2016</u></b></p> <p>All actions were reported as complete by the date of the meeting.</p>	<p>ARAC 06/16/2  <b>NOTED</b>        <b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update</b></p> <p>a) <b><u>Welcome</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner welcomed everyone to the meeting and commented that he was looking forward to working with the committee and developing a good relationship with members.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>b) <b><u>ARAC Reappointment</u></b></p> <p>The current term of appointment for members has been extended by one year. The Commissioner thanked members for continuing in their positions for a further year.</p> <p>The recruitment process for a new committee will begin in early 2017. Members of the current committee are eligible to apply for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term.</p> <p>The committee will be reduced from 4 to 3 members for the next term and the terms of appointment will be for 1, 2 and 3 years to ensure continuity.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>c) <b><u>Accounting Officer Responsibility</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner attended Accounting Officer training during his first week in office. He stated that he is fully aware of his responsibilities and is willing to accept those responsibilities.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>d) <u>Scheme of Delegation</u></b></p> <p>A meeting has been arranged to discuss the scheme of delegation in order to formalise areas and levels of delegation.</p> <p>E Hoy advised that the Commissioner has not received his Accounting Officer letter from DfC.</p> <p>N Griffin advised that AO responsibilities revert on appointment and C Burns confirmed that accounts could not be signed off without Commissioner approval.</p> <p>N Griffin to ensure letter is forwarded to Commissioner as a priority.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>(Act 122)</p>
<p><b>e) <u>Engagement</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner informed members that he has attended the following events since taking up his post:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action on Elder Abuse;</li> <li>• Public Accountability and Governance Training for AOs;</li> <li>• Meetings with DfC;</li> <li>• Meetings with government ministers for Health and Justice;</li> <li>• Positive Futures event;</li> <li>• Internal meeting on Powers and Duties;</li> </ul> <p>Upcoming events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NICON Annual Conference;</li> <li>• NIAMH – launch of report on supporting older people;</li> <li>• NI Citizens’ Rights Forum – on financial abuse.</li> </ul>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>f) <u>Corporate Plan</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy advised that the draft priorities are ready and are based on Value, Respect and Protection. Key areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Abuse;</li> <li>• Adult Safeguarding Bill;</li> <li>• Security of Tenure within Nursing Homes (Role of Regulator);</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship;</li> <li>• Older People on line.</li> </ul> <p>The consultation on the draft priorities should be completed by end of the Summer.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>g) <u>Budget</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner expressed his disappointment that the current budget severely restricts his ability to exercise his statutory powers. He feels the office is severely underfunded and has concerns about COPNI's ability to deal with all the requests it receives for support from individual older people. Two Legal Officers are currently dealing with substantial caseloads and the increase in public awareness of COPNI is likely to further impact this situation.</p> <p>The Commissioner expressed concern that the Department for Communities did not yet fully appreciate the remit of the Commissioner's powers and duties. In particular, the independence of the role and across-government extent of the powers and duties.</p> <p>Members shared their concern as to COPNI's ability to deliver its remit within allocated budget.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Update</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Recruitment and Induction</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy noted that COPNI has a new Finance and Governance Manager, Helen Gault, who will take up permanent post on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016. The members welcomed Helen.</p> <p>E Hoy noted that the retention of staff is hindered by the current single point pay scale and that relative savings resulting from this have been offset by recruitment costs. Budget constraints have also reduced staff training provision.</p> <p>E Hoy to write to DfC in relation to this issue.</p> <p>N Griffin advised, that once the letter is received by DfC, that this will be an opportunity to open up discussion and begin formal process.</p> <p>The Chair noted that members have raised this issue previously and it is considered a risk.</p> <p><b>b) <u>2015/16 Finance and Expenditure</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy outlined expenditure for members and advised that no adjustments were expected for 2015/16.</p> <p>The Chair thanked E Hoy for keeping members well informed throughout the year with high level reports.</p>	<p><b>06/16/3a</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><i>(ACT 123)</i></p> <p><b>ARAC 06/16/3b</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>c) <u>Quarterly Performance Report</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy presented the report and advised members that all KPIs have been met.</p> <p>The Chair sought assurance regarding the ICT SLA. H Gault advised that the assurance had been included in the Q4 Assurance Statement returned to OFMDFM. The annual SLA review meeting examines the level of audit assurance of ECNI audits. The Chair was informed that the ICT assurance statement would be brought to the September ARAC meeting.</p>	<p>ARAC 06/16/3c</p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>(Act 124)</p>
<p><b>d) <u>Accountability Meeting</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy reported the first meeting between the Commissioner and new Department for Communities has taken place. E Hoy shared her disappointment at DfC's lack of understanding of the role of COPNI.</p> <p>A discussion followed between members on the role of COPNI in relation to budget allocation and their concern that the Commissioner's ability to carry out his role within current spend is extremely difficult and additional resources are needed in order to make a greater impact. Members discussed writing to the Minister to express their concern, however, they decided not to submit a letter at this stage, but remain supportive of the Commissioner.</p> <p>The Chair asked N Griffin to bring the committee's concerns to DfC.</p> <p>The Chair extended an invite to Janet Smyth and David Malcolm to attend the next ARAC meeting- E Hoy to arrange. He added that while COPNI may be a small ALB its remit is far reaching.</p> <p>The Chair requested that members are kept up to date with budgetary discussions and added that the committee is fully aware of budget under-allocation and fully supports the Commissioner in his bid to secure adequate funding.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>(Act 125)</p> <p>(Act 126)</p>
<p><b>e) <u>Senior Management Team</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that the Senior Management Team continue to meet monthly.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>f) <u>Complaints</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that there have been no complaints for this quarter.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p>The Chair asked E Hoy if the matter of Mr Bennett writing directly to ARAC members had been dealt with. J Erskine said that the correspondence was outside the remit of this committee.</p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that a letter was issued to that effect and the committee now considered this matter closed.</p> <p><b>g) <u>2016/17 Business Plan – Reporting on Progress</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that the Business Plan was submitted to OFMDFM in January as required by the Management Statement. The business plan was revised and submitted to DfC in April. The business plan was further revised following the opening budget allocation and had to be significantly adjusted. Therefore, important areas of work will be delayed until further resources can be secured. The Commissioner will raise this with the Minister and officials of DfC. The business plan was resubmitted at the accountability meeting in June and has not yet been approved.</p>	<p>ARAC 06/16/3d</p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 7: Update from DfC</b></p> <p>The Chair formally welcomed N Griffin to the meeting.</p> <p>N Griffin informed members that there are 22 ALBs under the auspices of DfC and he has responsibility for COPNI and NICCY. The possibility of an ALB Forum is being considered.</p> <p>DfC want to ensure a centralised structure is in place and risk assessments are carried out which are reflective of the nature of the ALBs, their governance and sponsorship.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 8: Update from NIAO</b></p> <p><b>a) NIAO External Audit Strategy</b></p> <p>C Burns confirmed there were no significant risks identified and the audit should be certified by early November.</p> <p>C Burns asked for a 1 item agenda meeting with members to approve the audited Financial Statements. Members agreed this should be arranged in late October 2016 to meet the timeframe within the NIAO External Audit Strategy and facilitate the certification of the accounts by the C&amp;AG.</p> <p>C Burns advised this would be her last meeting and she will be replaced by Cathy Doey going forward.</p>	<p>ARAC 06/16/4</p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>(Act 127)</p>

<p>The Chair extended thanks to C Burns for her professional, diligent and courteous work with COPNI and her contribution to ARAC.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 9: Update from Internal Audit</b></p> <p><b>a) Final Audit Assurance Report 2015/16</b></p> <p>B Clerkin confirmed that the report has been finalised, the assurance rating is satisfactory and gave an overview of the findings as detailed in his report.</p> <p>J Erskine added that the members were pleased with the report and thanked all staff for their work.</p> <p><b>b) 2016/17 Audit Plan</b></p> <p>Members agreed that the Audit Plan had been discussed and approved in the previous meeting.</p> <p>B Clerkin advised that the review of the Case Management System and the follow up review would take place in July. The Performance Management review is scheduled for October.</p> <p>B Clerkin confirmed that each section would be reported to ARAC once complete.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/5a</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 06/16/5b</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 10: Audit Recommendations</b></p> <p>E Hoy noted that the Audit Recommendations were all agreed with exception of two which remain at amber and drew members' attention to those.</p> <p>E Hoy advised that the Fraud Policy is based on COPNI's parent Department's and therefore COPNI wishes to ensure that this reflects the change in departmental sponsorship. DfC are to submit a copy of their policy to COPNI.</p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that all PPEs are due at the end of June and these are on schedule for completion.</p> <p>C Burns and B Clerkin confirmed that ASM and NIAO follow up on audit recommendations.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/6</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>(Act 128)</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 11: Risk Matters</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Corporate Risk Register 2016/17 Quarter 1</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy noted there is a Risk Management meeting every quarter with the Risk Analysis Team. E Hoy gave a summary of the risks,</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/7</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p>commenting that COPNI has never been adequately funded or been able to carry out the full suite of duties.</p> <p>The Commissioner noted, following a meeting with his Legal team, that failure to exercise his statutory duties remains the most significant risk for COPNI.</p> <p>The Chair asked if anyone had any queries. All members and attendees were content and felt it was a very comprehensive report.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 12: Update on DAO and DFD Guidance</b></p> <p>The report was noted. Members noted their appreciation for the summary report.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/8</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 13: Summary of Key Issues from Public Accounts Committee Reports</b></p> <p>There were no issues applicable to COPNI during the period.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/9</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 14: Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Nothing to note.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 15: Dates of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>Proposed Dates of Next Meeting:</p> <p>5 September 2016  A one item meeting to be held in October – date to be confirmed.  5 December 2016  6 March 2017</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/10</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>

Signed:   
Chairperson

Date: 5/12/16