

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 3 DECEMBER 2018 AT 1.30PM
IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS

Gerard Campbell (Chair)
Joseph Campbell
Professor Dolores O'Reilly

IN ATTENDANCE

Eddie Lynch (Commissioner, COPNI)
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)
Bernie Rooney (Department for Communities) *to item 7*
Ciaran Cunningham (Department for Communities) *to item 7*
Peter O'Sullivan (Northern Ireland Audit Office)
Andrew Moore (Northern Ireland Audit Office)
Amanda McMaw (ASM – Internal Audit)
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI)

<p>Agenda Item 1: Apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular welcomed B Rooney and A Moore to their first meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>B Rooney indicated she would now attend the Committee as Martin Walker was working in a different business area of DfC. Bebhinn Ni Bhriain would be on a career break from January 2019.</p> <p>A McMaw indicated her colleague Brian Clerkin was unable to attend.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</p> <p>a) <u>Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>E Hoy declared an interest in relation to item 6(a) Staffing Issues, as she has the same terms and conditions as the COPNI staff body.</p> <p>b) <u>Fraud</u></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p>

<p>c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u></p> <p>The one item was noted and it was signed by the Chair.</p> <p>d) <u>Register of International Conferences & Events</u></p> <p>There were no items for this period.</p> <p>e) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u></p> <p>The two items were noted.</p> <p>f) <u>Whistleblowing</u></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/2c APPROVED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 12/18/2e NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of Meetings & Action Tracker</p> <p>a) <u>Draft Minutes of 3rd September 2018</u></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and they were signed by the Chair.</p> <p>b) <u>Draft Minutes of 22nd October 2018</u></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and they were signed by the Chair.</p> <p>c) <u>Action Tracker for 22nd October 2018</u></p> <p>It was noted B Rooney would later update the meeting on in-year bids, in relation to the action marked amber. The other four actions were marked green. Members indicated they were content for Officers to form the Evaluation Panel for the Internal Audit Tender.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/3a APPROVED</p> <p>ARAC 12/18/3b APPROVED</p> <p>ARAC 12/18/3c NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update</p> <p>a) <u>Engagement</u></p> <p>In September, the Commissioner spoke to Unison about the Home Truths report. He also met with NIPSO about the Home Truths report and complaints about HSC bodies. He spoke at the Ards and North Down GP Federations Educational Workshop about safeguarding vulnerable adults. He gave an opening address at a Queen's University</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

conference on care home standards, and listened to feedback from care home providers on the Home Truths report.

In October, the Commissioner attended the Age Friendly Belfast Convention. The Commissioner and Chief Executive attended the ALB Business Planning event with ALB Chairs and Chief Executives, and also attended the International Ombudsman Institute event hosted by NIPSO. The Commissioner spoke at the Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership Annual Celebration, at a panel session for the Pensioners' Parliament and at the Citizens' Assembly.

In November, the Commissioner and Chief Executive visited an Alpha Housing sheltered scheme in North Belfast. The Commissioner attended the UK Action Against Loneliness Conference in Manchester. Earlier today he spoke at a Cross Party event on social isolation and loneliness at Stormont. Later this week he will open an international symposium on loneliness in Belfast.

COPNI has signed a memorandum of understanding with St John Ambulance, the Department of Justice and the PSNI for the launch of the Support Responder pilot scheme in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. The service provides immediate practical and emotional support to older people if they become victims of a crime and is designed to reduce its impact. St John Ambulance volunteers, working in pairs, will attend within 90 minutes of being mobilised by police. There is no charge for their services.

In December, COPNI will hold an event at the Ulster Museum regarding isolation and loneliness. The Commissioner will also announce the winner of the Christmas card competition and present the winner with a framed Christmas card using her photograph at the event.

b) Accountability Meeting

NOTED

COPNI is still awaiting approval of the in-year bids. At the October accountability meeting DfC proposed a project that would review the original business cases (2009 and 2012) and the baseline budget for future funding. COPNI welcomed this and agreed to work with DfC on it.

c) Budget 2018/19

NOTED

Should a 4% cut apply in 2019/20, this would reduce the baseline budget to £724k which creates an immediate pressure of £129k. This year's budget is on course for full spend however COPNI are awaiting the outcome of an in-year bid to allow the Dunmurry Manor Care Home Investigation Expert Panel to work on the relevant authorities' responses to the Home Truths report. E Hoy advised that the longer the approval

of this bid is withheld, the more difficult it will be to carry out the work on hold before March 2019, ensuring full spend of the bid money.

d) Corporate Plan

NOTED

J Campbell raised the Cost of Care project and highlighted there was insufficient lead in time for this in 2018/19. E Hoy indicated this has been moved to the Business Plan 2019/20 and will be prioritised when the Dunmurry Manor Care Home Investigation is complete.

Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Update – Emerging Issues

a) Staffing Issues

NOTED

Recruitment

EH highlighted the staff turnover for the last two years was 74%. Staff retention problems were due to staff being on a fixed pay point on the lowest point of their analogous NICS grade, and the lack of progression opportunities in a small organisation. It was acknowledged that staff members have all moved on to better terms and conditions in their new posts. COPNI is recruiting two Policy and Research Officers and a Communications and Engagement Manager. Two administration posts continued to be filled by agency staff. Vacancies had a significant impact on the staff team and productivity and will impact the first half of the coming financial year while staff are inducted, trained and get up to speed with the complex research and policy issues. A Policy Officer remains on secondment from the NI Assembly, subject to quarterly review and mutually agreed continuation of the secondment.

Pay Issue

E Hoy declared an interest as she has the same terms and conditions as the COPNI staff body.

Staff have regularly expressed dissatisfaction that they are on a fixed pay point on the lowest point of their analogous NICS grade. The Chair recognised this had been an issue for staff since COPNI was set up, and it has caused significant time and resources to be spent on recruitment. E Hoy highlighted that only two staff remained in post from the original Investigation team, and who could therefore provide in-depth information from it. She said the loss of investigatory staff was due to them securing new posts in different organisations including central government where the posts had pay progression. She was not aware of any other ALBs on a fixed pay point.

Staff have submitted a paper to the Commissioner about the pay issue. COPNI had started a discussion with OFMDFM when it was the sponsorship body. The issue has since been revisited with DfC. It is necessary to reach a mutually acceptable resolution.

B Rooney advised that Leo O'Reilly would leave his post as Permanent Secretary in the Department for Communities on 7 December. The new Permanent Secretary would need an evidence-based paper on the pay issue. DfC will discuss this with COPNI.

b) Senior Management Team

SMT continues to meet monthly and is focused on the Business Plan 2019/20. It is difficult to plan as no in-year funding has been approved. COPNI has had increased engagement with the PSNI and the Nursing and Midwifery Council following the Home Truths report, and COPNI is engaging with family members and witnesses as necessary.

c) Finance and Expenditure 2018/19

For the period to 31 October 2018 there was a variance of £8k to the budget, as £491k was spent compared to a budget of £499k. COPNI had projected a small underspend on resources. The NIAO invoice was £3k less than anticipated. Since the accounts were prepared there was an easement of £15k due to staff vacancies (salaries) and the reduction in the NIAO invoice. This will be allocated to programme expenditure. While office expenditure, travel and training were currently less than budget, expenditure before year end was planned. COPNI will break even at year end.

J Campbell commended H Gault and the team for managing the finances very well. The lower bill from NIAO was a positive reflection on COPNI's excellent governance performance.

In relation to post-investigation work on Dunmurry Manor, E Hoy indicated internal analysis of the relevant authorities' responses had been done. The post-investigation expenditure (for the Expert Panel) and also the Commissioner's next statement on the investigation was on hold as approval for in year bids was awaited.

d) Quarterly Performance Report July – September 2018

The report was discussed at the October Accountability meeting, and E Hoy highlighted risks had changed since the report was written.

e) Quarterly Assurance Statement July – September 2018

The report was noted.

f) Business Plan 2018/19 – Progress on Objectives

E Hoy reported the objectives were marked as green. For the additional objectives, preliminary work could be done if in-year bids are approved,

NOTED

ARAC 12/18/6c
NOTED

ARAC 12/18/6d
NOTED

ARAC 12/18/6e
NOTED

ARAC 12/18/6f
NOTED

and the objectives would be carried into the 2019/20 year. Three new staff will be inducted in the fourth quarter of 2018/19.

g) Complaints

NOTED

E Hoy referred to the pay issue complaint from staff in section 6(a).

Agenda Item 7: Update from Department for Communities

NOTED

B Rooney indicated she had taken on the sponsorship role of COPNI and NICCY during the summer. She has set up a new Social Inclusion Policy Division team. It was responsible for: disability policy; gender policy; sexual orientation policy; active ageing policy; active ageing strategy. She established the Programme for Government (PfG) structures. Previously she had the sponsorship role for the NI Housing Executive.

An Innovation Lab on the governance of ALBs, working under the umbrella of PfG, and with the involvement of some ALBs (including E Hoy), produced a report with 12 key recommendations in February. DoF was fast-tracking this guidance and asking Departments to implement the recommendations.

B Rooney felt the PfG and collaborative working within the public sector were necessary in order to improve life for citizens. Hard decisions would have to be made in the absence of Ministers. It was necessary to streamline business case processes, and to listen to stakeholders. She highlighted the importance of open dialogue, trusting relationships, transparency and earned autonomy.

B Rooney commended COPNI's co-operation with DfC and the auditors. She acknowledged that due to demographic changes projected, COPNI's workload was likely to increase due to an increasing ageing population.

She proposed setting up a joint project, between DfC and COPNI, to review COPNI's original business case to set up the Commissioner's office, in particular the programme budget. This would develop an evidence-based narrative around NISRA statistics on older people in the current and future years. It was hoped the project would resolve various issues raised by COPNI to DfC. The Commissioner indicated COPNI is keen to develop its relationship with academia.

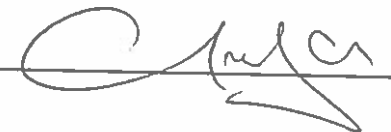
B Rooney indicated the project would include a review of the organisational structure, job evaluation and grading, and pay settlement. A work options paper will be agreed, with recommendations to go the new Permanent Secretary (Tracy Meharg will take up her post on 10 December). DfC has secured Gerry Dunne, on secondment from the N.I. Assembly, who is independent of DfC and COPNI, to carry out the

<p>project and produce a report. NIAO and the Committee will be kept informed.</p> <p>B Rooney sought the view of the Committee and said a project briefing meeting will be held before Christmas to agree the deliverables, with the work to be completed before the end of this financial year. An options paper will be prepared for the new Permanent Secretary.</p> <p>The Commissioner welcomed working on the project with DfC and Gerry Dunne, and it was timely to review how his office was originally set up, and highlighted the growing ageing population. The Chair felt this was a very positive initiative to review the baseline budget and develop a new partnership-based relationship with DfC. J Campbell and D O'Reilly also supported this joint approach as a great opportunity for COPNI to make a strong case, and they were very impressed by the good work of COPNI. They offered to contribute to the process. P O'Sullivan confirmed NIAO wished to be involved in the process.</p> <p>B Rooney and C Cunningham left the meeting at 3.05pm.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 8: Draft Business Plan 2019/20</p> <p>EH highlighted this version was a first draft, and both the narrative and prioritisation of projects will change significantly once COPNI has its opening allocation confirmed. DfC had previously asked COPNI what it would need to operate in 2019/20 and COPNI had responded with £1m. There was still much work to do within the Corporate Plan. The Business Plan is to be submitted to DfC by the end of January 2019. The focus is on Respect, Value and Protect, the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020. While the Committee was not asked to approve the plan, she welcomed feedback from Members.</p> <p>The Chair asked for consideration to be given to including outcomes in the business plan now the organisation has been operational for six years. EH indicated there would be a cost and resource involved to measure outcomes, and this may be difficult to justify within the budget pressures. The Chair highlighted the importance of showing the value of COPNI to society, and the government should invest in COPNI to deal with future challenges for older people. J Campbell suggested consideration could be given to demonstrating outcome based accountability at the strategic level of the plan and E Hoy welcomed the suggestion and agreed that this could be considered as the draft developed.</p> <p>Members congratulated the Commissioner and his staff on their good work.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/7 NOTED</p> <p>ACT 168</p>

<p>Agenda Item 9: Risk Matters</p> <p>a) <u>Corporate Risk Register Quarter 3 2018/19</u></p> <p>Risk 1 'Constraints due to insufficient budget' had been reduced from high to medium, and Risk 2 'Corporate Plan will require increased baseline funding' remained high. These were discussed and agreed.</p> <p>The other eight risks were noted.</p> <p>It was agreed to include the symbols ↓ ↔ ↑ in the first column to represent changes in risk levels since the previous version of the risk register, for ease of reading.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/8a NOTED</p> <p>ACT 169</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Update from Northern Ireland Audit Office</p> <p>a) <u>Report To Those Charged With Governance</u></p> <p>P O'Sullivan indicated a draft version was brought to the October meeting, and this was a good report. NIAO charged a lower audit fee for 2017/18 due to the good work of his colleague Laura McCullagh and H Gault. A Moore will work on the audit for 2018/19.</p> <p>The Chair thanked NIAO and commended the good relationship between COPNI and the auditors. The report demonstrates sound financial performance and gives solid assurance to the Committee.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/10a NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: Update from Internal Audit</p> <p>A McMaw indicated there are three areas for review and reports will be brought to the March meeting. The audit of Business Planning started today. Programme and Project Management (Dunmurry Manor Care Home investigation) and Follow Up Review will commence in January 2019.</p> <p>There was a discussion on how to use the two contingency days available this year, and it was agreed these could be used for post project evaluation of the DMCH investigation however it was unlikely this could be done by the end of March 2019.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 12: Audit Recommendations – Progress to date</p> <p>The single item, with a target of March 2020, was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/12 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Accountability and Financial Management Guidance Update</p> <p>The two items in the report were noted. The Commissioner confirmed that FD (DOF) 08/18 did not apply to COPNI as it did not have a Board. The remuneration of the Committee will be reviewed in due course.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/13 NOTED</p>

<p>Agenda Item 14: COPNI Updated Policies</p> <p>The nine policies listed in the report were noted, including the new 'Information and Retention and Disposal Schedule'.</p> <p>The Financial Manual and Procurement Policy will be brought to the March meeting. The Business Continuity Plan will be updated after the three new starts take up their posts.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/14 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 15: Review of ARAC Terms of Reference</p> <p>There were no changes to be made, and this was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/18/15 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 16: Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 17: Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held on Monday 4th March 2019 at 1.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 3.55pm.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

Signed:
Chairperson



Date:

4/3/19

