

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 30 JUNE 2014 AT 9.30AM IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

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

**IN ATTENDANCE** Claire Keatinge, Commissioner, COPNI  
Emer Boyle (Acting Chief Executive and Head of Legal and  
Policy Advice, COPNI) to item 13  
Gerard McKeown (Head of Finance and Governance, COPNI)  
Christine Burns (NIAO) to item 9(e)  
Pauline Poots (ASM – Internal Audit)  
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI) to item 13

<p><b>Agenda Item 1: Apologies</b></p> <p>An apology was received from Nicola Drennan (OFMDFM) who was unable to attend due to short staffing. An apology was also received from Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive) who was on long-term sick leave. The ARAC signed a card to be sent to Ms Hoy.</p> <p><b><u>Introductions</u></b> All those present introduced themselves.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</b></p> <p>a) <b><u>Conflict of Interests</u></b> No conflicts of interests were reported in this period.</p> <p>b) <b><u>Fraud</u></b> No incidents of fraud were reported in this period.</p> <p>c) <b><u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u></b> This was tabled, then reviewed and signed by the Chair. A current copy will be put on the COPNI website.</p> <p>d) <b><u>Register of Interests</u></b> No interests were declared. Mr McKeown indicated he will circulate the previous version of the register to Members, for them to refer to and complete a new register. Senior Managers will also be asked to complete a register.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ACTION COPNI (ACT 43)</b></p> <p><b>ACTION COPNI (ACT 44)</b></p>



This has been a particularly busy period, during which Ms Boyle has been acting up to Chief Executive.

The Older Carers' Assessments Report was launched on 9<sup>th</sup> June, and the Commissioner has made specific recommendations to the Minister for Health.

The Adult Social Care Roundtable was successfully held on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

The Adult Safeguarding Report was launched on 25<sup>th</sup> June and the recommendations were well received by stakeholders, political parties and the Age sector.

The Positive Contributions of Older People report will be launched later in 2014.

The Commissioner highlighted the quality of the work which had received positive feedback, and the good reputation of the Commissioner's office. The Chair commended the Commissioner's recent appearances in the local media.

a) **Travel**

During the period the Commissioner attended: the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing in London; a meeting with the Commissioner for Older People for Wales. Ms Boyle attended a conference on 'Protection of Older People' in Dublin. The Commissioner has travelled extensively in Northern Ireland to attend events and engagements. She will meet Dame Mellor and Lord Filkin in London during August to learn about complaints, and has been invited to an Ageing Conference in India in November.

NOTED

b) **Recruitment and Induction**

The Office Manager, two Administration Officers and the Communications and Engagement Administration Officer have been recruited. The recruitment exercise for two permanent Policy Officers and one temporary Policy Officer was underway.

NOTED

c) **Finance and expenditure**

Mr McKeown reported the recent budget cut was larger than anticipated, and the projects and expenditure in the business plan had therefore been revised.

NOTED

ARAC 06/14/2a

**Budget Summary 2014/15**

The opening budget allocation for 2014/15 is £883K, which is £47k less than what was expected. COPNI has applied for an increased budget in the June monitoring round.

<p>It was agreed that the Commissioner would write to Dr Denis McMahon at OFMDFM and express both her and the Committee's disappointment at the reduced budget. As the 2014/15 budget was based on actual 2013/14 outturn the letter would highlight that COPNI had been in a start-up phase last year and therefore unable to spend its full budget. The ARAC commended the budget summary prepared by Mr McKeown, and it was agreed he would produce a one page summary of categories of expenditure against the Business Plan for the next meeting. Mr McKeown confirmed that this information was readily available.</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b> <b>COPNI</b> (ACT 46)</p>
<p><b><u>Consumption Report for period ended 31 May 2014</u></b> The report was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/2a</b> <b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>d) <b><u>Quarterly Performance Report</u></b> The report for Quarter 4 of 2013/14 was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/2b</b> <b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>e) <b><u>NIAO Audit</u></b> Mr McKeown confirmed that he expected slight changes to the financial statements as not all invoices had been received. Ms Burns indicated the audit will commence in September, and the audit strategy will be presented to the next meeting. The fieldwork will be done by November, and the ARAC will be kept up to date on the timeline.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>f) <b><u>Accountability Meeting</u></b> The Commissioner had attended the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. OFMDFM have been advised of the absence of the Chief Executive and that Ms Boyle is acting up. The meeting considered staffing and the Active Ageing Strategy.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>In response to a query, the Commissioner confirmed she had received positive feedback from OFMDFM and political representatives. In response to a query, Ms Boyle advised OFMDFM will carry out a review of the Commissioner's role during 2014/15 and COPNI will also do its own review, and the ARAC will be informed of the timeline.</p>	
<p>It was agreed to refer to OFMDFM's review in the letter to Dr McMahon mentioned in item 5(c).</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b> <b>COPNI</b> (ACT 46)</p>
<p>g) <b><u>Active Ageing Strategy Progress</u></b> The consultation was now closed, and there had been strong engagement, welcomed by the Junior Ministers.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p>h) <b><u>Senior Management Team meeting</u></b> The monthly meetings continue to be held.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p>i) <b>Revised COPNI Business Plan 2014/15</b>  The Commissioner had asked OFMDFM when this will be approved. She highlighted COPNI has met its deadline of submitting a Business Plan by the end of January. It was agreed that if the Revised Business Plan is not approved by September, the Chair will request a meeting with OFMDFM. The ARAC congratulated the senior management team on the Plan.</p> <p>j) <b>Cover arrangements during absence of Chief Executive</b>  There was increased pressure on the Commissioner and staff team, and an added cost due to the absence. Ms Boyle was acting up to Chief Executive while also performing her role as Head of Legal and Policy Advice. The Committee also noted that Mr McKeown had taken on increased responsibility.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/2c</b></p> <p><b>ACTION</b>  <b>COPNI (ACT 48)</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 6: Update from OFMDFM</b></p> <p>OFMDFM had declined an invitation to submit a report to this meeting.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 7: Draft Financial Statements for the year ending 31/03/14</b></p> <p>While the document was in draft, as some invoices were outstanding, it was materially accurate. The finalised accounts will be laid before the Assembly with the Annual Report by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.</p> <p>The Accounts were reviewed. COPNI's year end position did not come in at 0.5% of the budget as it received a recharge from Central Procurement Directorate. Mr McKeown remains confident that COPNI's spend will be no more than 1.5% variance.</p> <p>Ms Burns requested that revaluations are included in the finalised accounts, and this was noted.</p> <p>Regarding the Losses Statement which had a fruitless payment of £29, the Commissioner indicated all such payments are reported to OFMDFM and COPNI has controls in place to minimise these. The Chair indicated these appeared to be excessively scrutinised in comparison to other NDPBs' accounts. Ms Burns highlighted that while larger NDPBs cannot feasibly track all small fruitless payments, losses on contractual arrangements are recorded by these bodies. The fruitless payment of £29 has not yet been audited to confirm it is a fruitless payment.</p> <p>It was agreed a draft Governance Statement will be brought to the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/3</b></p> <p><b>ACTION</b>  <b>COPNI (ACT 49)</b></p>

<p><b>Agenda Item 8: Update on Business Continuity Plan</b></p> <p>The Business Continuity Plan was successfully tested, including a test of access to the Equality Commission server from an alternative location, on 31<sup>st</sup> May. The main change since the last version is that the alternative office location is now NI Human Rights Commission instead of Millennium House. The ARAC was content with the Plan, and this would be reviewed for sign-off by the Commissioner in July.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/4</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 9: Update from Internal Audit 2013/14</b></p> <p>a) <b><u>COPNI Legal Casework Report</u></b>  Ms Poots referred to the report and indicated there were one Priority 2 recommendation and four Priority 3 recommendations, with an overall satisfactory assurance rating. The Priority 3 recommendations had been implemented, and Ms Boyle indicated the timescale of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 for the Priority 2 recommendation of costing a system was achievable.</p> <p>A member asked whether the next internal audit should establish: (1) if some legal cases should be dealt with by other organisations; (2) if the legal work is effective; (3) how the cost of the legal work compares to work done by other organisations. Ms Poots indicated that while these points were not within the scope of this audit, they could be considered for a future audit, or done by an external body. The Commissioner highlighted that to date COPNI had not had any judicial cases. She was pleased with the casework done to date, especially as there had been turnover in Administration staff.</p> <p>It was agreed that an appendix on the process of legal case referrals will be included in the report, and that the report should state that this was the first internal audit of Legal Casework, carried out during the start up phase of COPNI.</p> <p>b) <b><u>COPNI Human Resources Report</u></b>  Ms Poots referred to the report and indicated there were two Priority 2 recommendations and three Priority 3 recommendations, with an overall satisfactory assurance rating. The Priority 2 recommendations related to policies and procedures, with a target of 31<sup>st</sup> August.</p> <p>c) <b><u>COPNI Follow Up Report</u></b>  Ms Poots referred to the Follow Up Report on recommendations made in the 2012/13 internal audit reviews. For the three reports, there had been 19 recommendations made. 10 of these had been fully implemented, 3 partially</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/5a</b></p> <p><b>ACTION</b>  <b>IA (ACT 50)</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 06/14/5b</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 06/14/5c</b></p>

<p>implemented, 5 not implemented and 1 superseded and closed.</p> <p>The Chair indicated Priority 3 recommendations would only be looked at in detail by the ARAC if target dates are not met, otherwise it is management's responsibility to implement. It was agreed a one page summary document of internal audit reports will be included for future meetings, as an oversight tool.</p> <p>d) <b><u>Annual Assurance Statement</u></b>  Ms Poots indicated there had been a change in contract during the 2013/14 year in internal auditors from Goldblatt McGuigan to ASM.</p> <p>There were three audits during the year and they all had satisfactory assurance ratings. There were no significant issues during the year, and there was an overall satisfactory rating for the year.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted this was a positive outcome for COPNI and thanked Ms Poots and her team for their work. Ms Burns indicated NIAO was content, and this report informed NIAO's strategy. Ms Poots indicated it was a very positive achievement for COPNI, given the new staff team and that these were the first internal audits.</p> <p>e) <b><u>Internal Audit Plan 2014/15</u></b>  Ms Poots tabled the proposed plan and indicated ASM has inherited and factored in Goldblatt McGuigan's previous internal audit strategy into this year three plan. The five areas to be audited were: (1) Financial Controls; (2) Programme Management arrangements; (3) Service Level Agreements; (4) ICT Strategy &amp; Security; (5) Follow up reviews and contingency.</p> <p>The Chair proposed acceptance of the plan. Ms Burns indicated NIAO was content with the Finance review.</p> <p><i>Ms Burns left the meeting at 11.45am.</i></p> <p>Ms Poots indicated she would report to the next two meetings, taking into account current staff absence.</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b>  <b>COPNI (ACT 51)</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 06/14/5d</b>  <b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 10: Risk Matters</b></p> <p>(a) <b><u>Risk Strategy</u></b>  This was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/6a</b>  <b>NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>(b) Update Corporate Risk Register</b>  Ms Boyle highlighted two new risks in the register: budgetary constraints and the Chief Executive's absence. There was discussion on the format, scoring and detail of the risk register. The Chair indicated that once controls are applied, most risks are high and medium, not major.</p> <p>The following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk register will remain in current format.</li> <li>• The two low risks will be removed after this meeting.</li> <li>• Going forward risks will be removed when they are fully managed and risk is diminished.</li> <li>• Risk owners will be updated.</li> <li>• Risk appetite will be updated to reflect that COPNI is not risk averse on its public facing role but is risk averse on governance.</li> <li>• All staff will be made aware of the risk register at the next team meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/6b NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ACTION COPNI (ACT 52)</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 11: Update on DAO and DFD Guidance</b></p> <p>The five updates on Dear Accounting Officer and Finance Director communications were noted. The Department of Finance and Personnel Audit and Risk Committee Handbook (NI) was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/7 NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 12: Summary of key issues from Public Accounts Committee Reports</b></p> <p>The reports on NI Water and DRD, and Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute were noted, and matters arising discussed. A member commended the reports prepared by Mr McKeown.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/8 a &amp; b</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 13: Schedule of Proposed Meetings for 2014/15</b></p> <p>The meeting schedule was noted.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/14/9</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 14: Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Staff left the meeting, and a closed session was held for the ARAC, the Commissioner and Internal Audit.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 15: Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>Monday 22 September 2014 at 9.30am in Equality House.</p>	



**Agenda Item 16: Opportunity for ARAC to meet the COPNI Team**

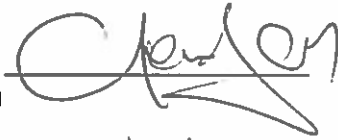
The ARAC were introduced to several staff members after the meeting.

It was agreed a 15 minute verbal report of some legal cases would be given to the ARAC at the next meeting, for information.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.

**ACTION**  
**COPNI (ACT 53)**

**Signed:**  
**Chairperson**



**Date:**

22/9/14