

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 9th DECEMBER 2013 AT 9.30AM IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST**

PRESENT:

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

APOLOGIES None

IN ATTENDANCE Claire Keatinge, Commissioner COPNI
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive [CE] COPNI)
Gerard McKeown (COPNI)
Christine Burns (NIAO)
Deborah Parke (NIAO)
Nicola Drennan (OFMDFM) (*Left at 11.50 am*)
Brian Clerkin (ASM)
Lorna Walker (COPNI)

(Immediately prior to this Meeting, the Chair had conducted his annual meeting with the Internal and External Auditors)

Agenda Item 1: Apologies There were no apologies.	NOTED
Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business	
a) <u>Conflict of Interests</u> No conflicts of interests were reported in this period.	NOTED
b) <u>Fraud</u> No incidents of fraud were reported in this period.	NOTED
c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u> This was reviewed and signed by the Chair. A current copy will be put on the COPNI website.	ACTION COPNI (ACT 1)
Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 2013	ARAC 12/13/1
The minutes of the last ARAC meeting were discussed and approved.	APPROVED
One ARAC member enquired if the Accountability Meeting (page 4) had included the failure of OFMDFM to sign off on	

<p>COPNI's Business Plan and recommended that the minutes be amended to show this issue. The CE said the minutes of the Accountability Meeting had not yet been made available.</p>	<p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 2)</p>
<p>The Annex listing actions arising from the meeting was reviewed, with supporting information provided by the CE, as appropriate.</p>	
<p>In relation to Action 6, it was reported that OFMDFM had appointed an officer to act as a mediator in the MOTO discussions. All present agreed that this issue needed to be resolved as a matter of urgency. The Chair asked for this to be progressed as far as possible to finalisation and reported on at the next ARAC meeting.</p>	<p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 3)</p>
<p>Under Action 7, it was agreed that the date and time for the proposed training of ARAC members would be confirmed by e-mail to members.</p>	<p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 4)</p>
<p>The representative from OFMDFM said that a Departmental response had been drafted with respect to Action 8 (in relation to approval of business and corporate plans) and she would check on the status of that with colleagues within OFMDFM. The Commissioner stated that COPNI was nonetheless operating within the Business Plan and that any risk related to this lay completely with the Department. The Committee expressed its complete dissatisfaction with the Department's processing of COPNI's Business Plan. The representative from OFMDFM undertook to feed that back to the Department.</p>	<p>ACTION OFMDFM (ACT 5)</p> <p>ACTION OFMDFM (ACT 6)</p>
<p>With reference to Action 9, the CE said that COPNI's recruitment to a strategic post was being held up because the organisation was waiting on a response from OFMDFM to the relevant business case. The representative from OFMDFM agreed to report that back to the appropriate officials in OFMDFM and the Department of Finance and Personnel.</p>	<p>ACTION OFMDFM (ACT 7)</p>
<p>In discussion, it was also suggested that the minutes of ARAC meetings should make clear when a point was being raised as an ARAC issue and when it was being raised as an issue by an individual identified member.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not Already on Agenda</p> <p>None</p>	

Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Business Update – Emerging Issues

ARAC 12/13/2

The Commissioner gave an update on current issues affecting her office:

Contracts - COPNI research contracts were progressing under the supervision of Emer Boyle. It was planned that the contracts would be reviewed in the new year to see if any further data or information was needed. Successful roundtable discussions had been conducted over recent months and extensive survey work was underway.

Travel - The Commissioner was continuing to seek input and relevant information from outside Northern Ireland and had recently attended meetings in London with representatives from the London School of Economics; the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing; and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The Commissioner said that she had found other organisations very positive towards COPNI's work.

Recruitment and Induction - The CE reported that the third tranche of recruitment had just ended. *(At this point, Gerard McKeown left the room due to a conflict of interest)* Christine Burns also declared an interest but ARAC members said they were content for Christine to remain in the room during the discussion. Two posts had been advertised: the Head of Legal and Policy Advice and the Finance and Governance Manager. The CE reported that there had been 12 and 6 applicants respectively for these posts. It was hoped that offers of appointment could be made by the end of February 2014. The fourth tranche of recruitment (for policy and administrative staff) was due to commence in the new year and it was hoped that multiple appointments would be made within that tranche in order to complete COPNI's full staff complement. The CE added that the area of greatest risk currently lay with the temporary status of policy officers but that this risk was largely mitigated by Emer Boyle's management of that section. *(At this point, Gerard McKeown came back into the room)*

ARAC 12/13/2a

Finance and Expenditure – Members' attention was drawn to the relevant papers. A COPNI staff member said that the accuracy of projections on staffing would improve as more permanent staff members were appointed. The CE added that COPNI was now spending more on age based work and less on corporate governance areas.

ARAC 12/13/2b

Quarterly Performance Report – ARAC Members recorded their thanks to staff for providing this report at the

**NOTED
ACTION**

<p>ARAC's request. The Commissioner would sign off on this report. The representative from OFMDFM said that this had been discussed at the Accountability Meeting and that the OFMDFM's Board was taking a great interest in the reports and risks in all its Arms Length Bodies. It was acknowledged that, while some risks were due to external factors that were outside the control of an organisation, there should be a consistency between the risk indicators and the narrative, and care should be taken in recording risks. The representative from OFMDFM said that the Department would write back to COPNI on this Report during the following week. The Chair also requested that any relevant correspondence from the Department should be copied to ARAC members as it was received and not left until the March ARAC meeting.</p> <p>NIAO Audit – this would be discussed in more detail under Agenda Item 7 later in this meeting</p> <p>Accountability Meeting – already discussed under Agenda Item 3 above.</p> <p>Active Ageing Strategy (AAS) process – the Commissioner reported that the AAS had still not been published and there had been no clear indication from OFMDFM as to when the publication date would be. The Commissioner said if she had not received a clear publication date by the end of 2013, she would contact Junior Ministers. The Chair asked what the roles of the Commissioner and COPNI would be after the AAS had been published. The Commissioner said it was the intention that COPNI's Commissioner would continue to chair an advisory group (whose terms of reference would be revisited at that time) in order to monitor the delivery of the AAS. She added that, when published, the AAS should be enormously beneficial to Government. The ARAC discussed the delay in progress with the AAS and asked if there had been any explanation for this. The Commissioner thought that staff illness within the Department had contributed to the delay but remarked that older people appeared to be low down on the Department's list of priorities.</p>	<p>COPNI (ACT 8)</p> <p>ACTION OFMDFM (ACT 9)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 10)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 11)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Update from OFMDFM</p> <p>The representative from OFMDFM was content that Departmental input had been provided, where appropriate, on the items already discussed and she would continue to raise further points during the remainder of the meeting.</p>	

<p>Agenda Item 7: Presentation by NIAO (Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13)</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/3</p>
<p>a) Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13</p> <p>The Annual Report and Financial Statements were presented for the ARAC's consideration. The CE said she was delighted that the process had reached this stage by this time in the year. The ARAC members confirmed that they were all happy with the governance statement.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/3a</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>b) Draft Report To Those Charged With Governance (RTTCWG)</p> <p>The auditor summarised the contents of the RTTCWG and outlined the process for completion of the Financial Statements and the laying of the documentation with the Northern Ireland Assembly. She added that only one change was expected from the draft, ie that, on the basis of additional information supplied by COPNI, the Priority rating of Issue Number 2 had now been downgraded from 1 to 2. The auditor recorded thanks from the NIAO team to COPNI's staff for their co-operation and help in making the audit a smooth process. The auditor explained the purpose and content of the Letter of Representation, which was a standard document, signed at the same time as the Financial Statements. The Chair asked for the word "Board" on page 1 of the Letter of Representation to be replaced by "ARAC" and for this change to be carried through into any other relevant documentation.</p> <p>The Chair left the floor open for the ARAC to discuss the documents. He stated that the ARAC needed to recommend to the Commissioner that the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2012-13 be accepted. B Gadd proposed that the ARAC formally approve the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2012-13 and this was seconded by J Erskine.</p> <p>The representative from OFMDFM pointed out that both documents described the status of Evelyn Hoy's previous employment in COPNI as a "secondment" when in fact it was a "loan". It was agreed that NIAO would change the wording of the final documentation to reflect this point. The ARAC was happy with the document, subject to the above revision. B Gadd proposed that the ARAC formally accept the RTTCWG and this was seconded by J Erskine.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/3b</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION COPNI / NIAO (ACT 12)</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION NIAO (ACT 13)</p> <p>NOTED</p>

<p>The Chair asked the CE to send the final versions of the above 2 documents to the ARAC and to provide an update at the next ARAC meeting. The Chair congratulated all concerned in this work and said he was happy to see a clean audit. The documents were to be signed that day, then delivered to NIAO for completion of the process, with a view to laying the accounts with the Assembly by Christmas.</p>	<p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 14) NOTED</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 15)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 8: Update from Internal Audit</p> <p>The internal auditor (IA) provided an update on the fieldwork work that had been undertaken within the annual internal audit plan. Close-out and follow-up meetings were scheduled to take place in mid December 2013 and March 2014 respectively and information from those meetings should be available for consideration at the March 2013 ARAC meeting.</p> <p>A copy of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook had also been provided for the ARAC's information. The IA said that the Handbook had not yet been finalised by DFP but he outlined the small number of changes that had been made.</p> <p>In response to an enquiry by one of the ARAC members, it was agreed that the consolidated response from the ARAC on its annual self-assessment would be reviewed and commented upon by IA.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/4</p> <p>ACTION Internal Audit (ACT 16)</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION COPNI / IA (ACT 17)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9: Risk Management Review of the Risk Register</p> <p>a) Draft note of meeting held on 31 October 2013 The Chair had been unable to attend the meeting on 31 October but those ARAC members who had been present indicated that they were content with the note of the meeting. The Chair asked the CE to have the note signed by an attendee(s).</p> <p>b) Risk Register ARAC considered the risk register which had been revised in line with the discussion on 31 October 2013. The Register had been provided in two versions – one showing tracked changes and one showing the final version, for ease of reading. In response to a query from an ARAC member, clarification was provided on why residual risk assessment at times remained unchanged after the implementation of additional controls.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/5</p> <p>ARAC 12/13/5a</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 18)</p> <p>ARAC 12/13/5b</p>

<p>the size of the organisation. In reply to a question from an ARAC member, the CE confirmed that the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) had its own separate BCP, which was currently under review. In drafting its BCP, COPNI had consulted extensively with officers in both ECNI and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). It was anticipated that, in due course, a consolidated BCP for the 3 organisations occupying Equality House would be prepared. The ARAC gave its approval to the BCP, which would now pass to management for implementation.</p>	<p>NOTED ACTION COPNI (ACT 22)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: ARAC training and development</p> <p>A COPNI staff member would provide confirmation to ARAC members of when this training would take place.</p>	<p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 23)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 12: Update on DAO and DFD Guidance</p> <p>A COPNI staff member briefed the ARAC on recently issued DAO and DFD letters and confirmed that COPNI was complying with the current regulations and guidance. It was the intention for COPNI to apply to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs for a Dispensation in relation to payment of travel and subsistence expenses.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/7</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 24)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Summary of key issues from PAC Reports</p> <p>ARAC members thanked COPNI staff for providing these summaries and stated that, if preparation of the summaries became too time-consuming, staff should alert the ARAC to that situation.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/8</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 14: ARAC Draft Annual Report to the Commissioner for Older People 2012/13</p> <p>The ARAC gave its approval to this Report, subject to the correcting of: one grammatical error and the title of the "Statement on Internal Control".</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/10</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 25)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 15: Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair wished everyone present a very Merry Christmas.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 16: Date of Next Meeting/Schedule of Meetings</p> <p>The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 10 March 2014.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/13/9</p> <p>NOTED</p>

Signed: 
Chairperson

Date: 11/8/14